LETTERS of GREAT WRITERS

From the time of Spenser to the time of Wordsworth

Hedley V. Taylor



ARTHUR MELVILLE CLARK
OF HERRIOTSHALL AND OXTON

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EDITED BY THE

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PREFACE

Many students of our literature will desire a fuller choice from the letters of our chief writers than is contained in this small volume, and must be referred to an ampler anthology. One of the most attractive, though now long out of print, is *Elegant Epistles, a Copious Collection of Familiar and Amusing Letters* (London, Rivington and others, 1814). Within recent years there have appeared two useful and handy publications: *Four Centuries of English Letters*, an admirable selection, illustrating both history and literature, by Mr. J. B. Scoones; and *Letters of Literary Men*, in two volumes, by Mr. F. A. Mumby. To both of these works I beg to acknowledge my indebtedness. The smaller compilation, which I have attempted, is intended simply as a companion to the main period of English Literature; and while the wants of the student have been chiefly kept in view, the more leisured reader has not been forgotten. Many friends, engaged in the teaching of

English Literature, have shown an interest in the undertaking. I desire, in an especial degree, to thank my friend, Professor H. Clement Notcutt, of Victoria College, Stellenbosch, for assistance and valuable suggestions. Having spent some time in India, I have been careful in the preparation of the notes to keep carefully in view the needs of possible Indian students.

HEDLEY V. TAYLOR.

CONTENTS

Page

LETTER 1. SPENSER TO RALEIGH - - - - - 1

The *Faery Queen* a continued allegory—its general end—why Spenser chose the history of King Arthur—the poets imitated by Spenser—the purpose of the first twelve books—the advantage of allegory—Xenophon compared with Plato—the story of Arthur—the Faery Queen herself—the virtue of Magnificence—the methods of Poet and of Historiographer—events preceding the story of the Faery Queen—the adventures of Sir Guyon and Sir Scudamour.

LETTER 2. RALEIGH TO SIR WALTER COPE - - - 7

Old acquaintance—Raleigh asks Cope to intercede for him with Sir Robert Cecil that his wife may be restored to him in the Tower—refuses to believe that Cecil is indifferent.

LETTER 3. PHILIP SIDNEY TO HIS BROTHER ROBERT - 9

Promise of remittance—Robert to maintain his dignity when travelling—Mr. Savile—the method of History—chronologists and ancient historians—the Historian as Orator, Poet, and Discourser—the definition of Discourser—how to take notes in reading History—Mathematics and Astronomy—Ciceronianism—books and money to be sent—horsemanship—political news—directions for sword-play.

LETTER 4. BACON TO SIR EDWARD COKE - - - 15

Protests against Coke's public insults—charges Coke with hindering his promotion—writes this letter to put an end to the scandal caused by their quarrels.

LETTER 5. BACON TO SIR GEORGE VILLIERS - - 17

Pleads the cause of Doctor Burgess, a silenced Puritan preacher—Bacon's object not only to help a worthy divine, but to add to the credit of Villiers.

LETTER 6. BACON TO JAMES I - - - - - 18

Reminds the king of his past services, but attributes them to the wisdom of James—his comfort in disgrace that his offences

Page

were not directly against James, nor his fall James's act—thankfully acknowledges the king's kindnesses; has greater need of them in his present state—his fortune now reduced to what his father left him—refuses to wrong the king by despairing of his compassion—many of his judges had excused his severe sentence on the ground that it left him to the king's mercy.

LETTER 7. SHAKESPEARE TO THE EARL OF SOUTHAMPTON - - - - - - - - 24

Dedicates to him *Venus and Adonis*, "the first heir of my invention".

LETTER 8. DONNE TO SIR HENRY GOODERE - - 25

Encloses a packet and acknowledges receipt of one—his application to Lady Bedford to pay his debts, that he might be "disengaged" when taking orders, produced a gift of only £30—political matters, Spain, the Low Countries, Scotland, the French Assembly.

LETTER 9. DONNE TO SIR ROBERT CARR - - - 28

Sends copies of his poems and his book, *Biathanatos*—the latter to be carefully preserved and neither printed nor burnt.

LETTER 10. JONSON TO WILLIAM DRUMMOND - - 29

Describes his return from Scotland and welcome by James I—requests material for his book—has a poem in hand on the Queen's death.

LETTER 11. JONSON TO DONNE - - - - - - 30

Complains that he has been slandered—Lady Bedford believes the slanders—but he will accept Donne's advice and be silent.

LETTER 12. HERRICK TO HIS FATHER - - - - 32

Requests a remittance of ten pounds—"good effects, produced from virtuous causes, will follow".

LETTER 13. SUCKLING TO AN UNKNOWN CORRESPONDENT - - - - - - - - - 33

Writes from the king's army on the banks of Tweed—sees little prospect of any fighting.

LETTER 14. WALLER TO LADY LUCY SIDNEY - - 35

Sends good wishes on the marriage of Lady Dorothy Sidney (Sacharissa).

LETTER 15. THOMAS BROWNE TO HIS SON - - - 36

Warns his son against an ancient example—his ship, when defeated, not to be blown up—asks for cinchona bark from Cadiz with notes of plants and the like from Spain and North Africa.

Page

LETTER 16. IZAAK WALTON TO JOHN AUBREY - - 39

In response to enquiry, gives some notes on Ben Jonson supplied by Lord Winton.

LETTER 17. MILTON TO JOHN BRADSHAW - - - 40

Recommends Andrew Marvel as assistant secretary on the ground of his scholarship, his knowledge of foreign languages, and the confidence reposed in him by Lord Fairfax.

LETTER 18. MILTON TO LEONARD PHILARAS - - - 42

Expresses gratitude for sympathy shown by Philaras when visiting London—describes the symptoms preceding his blindness and the stages of growing darkness—is resigned to a malady which he believes incurable.

LETTER 19. EVELYN TO PEPYS - - - - - 45

Has collected material for a History of the Dutch War—would like to write it in Latin as a Danish author has done, but has been discouraged in high quarters—can Pepys help?

LETTER 20. PEPYS TO EVELYN - - - - - 48

Has had the MS. of Evelyn's History for years but will now make restitution—will also restore a copy of the *Columna Trajani*—this has suffered damage, and would have been replaced by a fair copy, if one could have been found.

LETTER 21. COWLEY TO EVELYN - - - - - 49

Has at last finished his *Ode on the Royal Society*, and it will be issued with Sprat's *History*—regrets he could not embody all Evelyn's suggestions—asks the loan of Mackenzie's *Essay on Solitude*, to which Evelyn had replied.

LETTER 22. LOCKE TO DR. JOHN WYNNE - - - 51

Explains the origin of his *Essay*—has avoided scholasticism—agrees to the issue of a summary which would make "the way to real knowledge" easier to beginners—his own want of health and leisure forbids him to undertake it.

LETTER 23. DRYDEN TO JOHN DENNIS - - - - 53

Discusses his plan of translating Virgil—pagan and Christian "machines"—English comedy and tragedy compared with the ancient—Cowley and the Pindaric Ode—justifies himself against attacks on his character—speaks kindly of his friend Wycherley.

LETTER 24. DEFOE TO J. DYER - - - - - 58

Refers to some slanderous statements by Dyer—proposes a "fair truce of honour" between them as party journalists—henceforth no personalities or mentioning of names.

Page

LETTER 25. CONGREVE TO JOHN DENNIS - - - 60

Agrees with Dennis that English writers surpass in humour "other comic poets, ancient or modern"—gives therefore some thoughts on humour—danger of humour being confused with mere absurdity or caricature—follies on the stage should be consistent with men's humours—Jonson's *Volpone* criticised—discussion of Morose and Daw in the *Silent Woman*—Cob and some characters in *Bartholomew Fair* marked by mere eccentricity—the dramatist must do justice to individuality in human feelings and their display—affectations are good material in comedy but not equal to true humour—humour a peculiarly "English growth".

LETTER 26. SWIFT TO THE EARL OF HALIFAX - - 68

Asks the Whig Maecenas for preferment—Ireland is banishment—a Prebend at Westminster would be welcome, and was promised by William III.

LETTER 27. SWIFT TO POPE - - - - - - 71

Has just received *Gulliver's Travels* in print and some criticisms—wishes his friends could get him to England—the tediousness of Gay.

LETTER 28. SWIFT TO GAY - - - - - - 72

Suffering from lameness—rebukes Gay's laziness—Lord Cornbury—Pope's domesticity—Gay's thriftlessness and absence of mind—Irish news.

LETTER 29. BOLINGBROKE TO THE THREE YAHOOS - 75

Promises to return from the west by the end of next week—"that divine science, *la bagatelle*".

LETTER 30. BOLINGBROKE TO SWIFT (WITH P.S. BY POPE) - - - - - - - - 77

The decline of life—passion and philosophy—Pope "our divine"—Lady Bolingbroke's sufferings—Pope's mother—the *Essay on Man* in preparation.

LETTER 31. GAY AND POPE TO SWIFT - - - - 80

Opinions on *Gulliver's Travels*—criticisms by Lords Bolingbroke and Harcourt—views of the Duchess of Marlborough and lady critics—Swift's return to England expected in the early spring.

LETTER 32. POPE TO LADY MARY - - - - - 84

Would like to meet her in Italy—Homer best translated in Asia—Lady Mary an "Asiatic"—the romantic death of the haymakers, John and Sarah—Pope's two epitaphs on the pair.

Page

LETTER 33. POPE TO SWIFT - - - - - - - 89

A Jonathan Gulliver discovered in New England—the success of *The Beggar's Opera*—*The Treatise of the Bathos* and *The Dunciad*—Mrs. Pope's life hanging by a thread—Pope feels old at forty—his design in *The Dunciad*.

LETTER 34. POPE TO MARTHA BLOUNT - - - - 92

Melancholy caused by dead and dying friends—wishes Martha would act for herself.

LETTERS 35 AND 36. STEELE TO MARY SCURLOCK 94–95

Before, and after, marriage—love and "right reason".

LETTERS 37–8–9. STEELE TO HIS WIFE MARY - 96–97

Three short notes from an affectionate husband.

LETTER 40. STEELE TO SWIFT - - - - - - 97

Acknowledges Swift's earlier kindness, but expresses anger at the terms of his letter to Addison, and at the statement in the *Examiner* that Steele was "bridled" by Addison.

LETTER 41. ADDISON TO JOHN HUGHES - - - 98

Discusses the starting of a fresh periodical by Hughes and Sir Richard Blackmore—is anxious about "poor Dick".

LETTER 42. ADDISON TO POPE - - - - - - 100

Desires to assist Pope by securing subscribers to the promised translation of the *Iliad*—is busy on his estate at Bilton.

LETTER 43. ADDISON TO SWIFT - - - - - - 101

Is thankful to be free of his office and his asthma—has done what he could for the gentleman recommended by Swift—offers condolence on the death of Dr. Aske—invites Swift to Holland House.

LETTER 44. RICHARDSON TO MISS MULSO - - - 103

Replies to criticisms on his idea of love as shown in Grandison and Harriet—Miss Mulso one of his "best girls and best judges"—why do many young women, while admiring a good man, marry a bad one?

LETTER 45. LADY MARY TO MR. P. - - - - - 108

News from Constantinople—life in Turkey—manners of the Turkish women—Addison's secretaryship and marriage—Pope and Congreve—the success of Pope's *Iliad* raises anticipations of his *Odyssey*.

Page

LETTER 46. LADY MARY TO MR. P. - - - - 111

Acknowledges his letter with the epitaph on the haymakers—offers alternative lines, "more just, though not so poetical".

LETTER 47. LADY MARY TO ARBUTHNOT - - - 113

Refers to his arbitration in her quarrel with Pope—Pope's assertion that she has lampooned a lady false—probably a forgery of his.

LETTER 48. LADY MARY TO THE COUNTESS OF BUTE - 115

Has read the books sent and wept over *Clarissa*—*Clarissa* and *Pamela* two mischievous books—her chief pleasure in solitude is writing to her daughter.

LETTER 49. LADY MARY TO THE COUNTESS OF BUTE - 117

More books—strictures on Bolingbroke and the Peace of Utrecht.

LETTER 50. CHESTERFIELD TO SWIFT - - - - 121

Acknowledges Swift's letter asking a post for Mr. Launcelot—promises that it shall be given in due course, apart from politics.

LETTER 51. CHESTERFIELD TO PHILIP STANHOPE - 123

Explains the nature of his regard for his son—no such thing as natural affection—his feeling regulated by merit or demerit—"If once we quarrel, I will never forgive".

LETTER 52. CHESTERFIELD TO PHILIP STANHOPE - 125

Lessons to be learnt from actors—manner as important as matter—success in Parliament due to manner—Pitt and Lord Mansfield—Pitt's rise in the face of opposition due to eloquence—let every utterance be elegant—French graces and Marcel.

LETTER 53. JOHN WESLEY TO JOHN KING - - - 130

Screaming to be shunned by the preacher—lives shortened by excess of vehemence.

LETTER 54. JOHNSON TO BOSWELL - - - - 132

Gives his opinion on the *Account of Corsica*—the Journal superior to the History—Boswell's approaching marriage.

LETTER 55. JOHNSON TO BOSWELL - - - - 134

Acknowledges the gift of a Pindar—message for the poet Beattie—Boswell at a masquerade—a new edition of the *Dictionary*—Goldsmith's comedy and other items of news.

LETTER 56. JOHNSON TO JAMES MACPHERSON - - 136

Replies to his "impudent letter"—defies his menaces and rage.

Page

LETTER 57. JOHNSON TO BOSWELL - - - - 137

No evidence of Macpherson's alleged "originals"—"Where are the manuscripts?"—the Erse language and writing.

LETTER 58. JOHNSON TO BOSWELL - - - - 138

The Chesterfield letter—Boswell's money difficulties—death of Beauclerc—Dr. Percy's fire—Boswell's melancholy.

LETTER 59. JOHNSON TO BOSWELL - - - - 140

Boswell's "affectation of distress"—the *Lives* finished.

LETTER 60. JOHNSON TO CHESTERFIELD - - - 140

Comments on the notice of his *Dictionary* in the *World*—Chesterfield's eulogium kind but tardy—seven years ago—what is a patron?

LETTER 61. JOHNSON TO RICHARDSON - - - - 143

Compliments on the new edition of *Clarissa*—why not add an index?

LETTER 62. JOHNSON TO MRS. THRALE . - - 144

Writes from Lichfield—news of his own and of Garrick's circle—wants to hear from Queeney Thrale.

LETTER 63. JOHNSON TO MRS. PIOZZI - - - - 146

Protests against her "ignominious" marriage.

LETTER 64. JOHNSON TO MRS. PIOZZI - - - - 147

Breathes "one sigh more of tenderness"—urges Mr. Piozzi to settle in England—the omen of Mary, Queen of Scots.

LETTER 65. JOHNSON TO HIS MOTHER - - - - 148

Thanks "the best mother in the world"—begs her forgiveness—a prayer.

LETTER 66. JOHNSON TO JANE LANGTON - - - 149

Hopes that she will mind her pen, book, and needle; say her prayers and read her Bible.

LETTER 67. BOSWELL TO JOHNSON - - - - 151

Writes at Wittemberg on the tomb of Melanchthon—his vow of "eternal attachment".

LETTER 68. FIELDING TO THE HON. GEORGE LYTTELTON 153

Matrimonial congratulations—recommends Edward Moore as Deputy Licenser to the Stage.

Page

LETTER 69. STERNE TO DAVID GARRICK - - - 156

Regrets words which have caused unintentional pain—urges return to the London stage.

LETTER 70. HUME TO AN UNKNOWN CORRESPONDENT 158

Replies to doubts on *Ossian* raised by the poet Gray—the story of Macpherson—arguments from the Highland bards—funds being raised for Macpherson's Highland tour—Hume's own objections—coincidences.

LETTER 71. GRAY TO HORACE WALPOLE - - - 164

The *Magazine of Magazines* intends to print the *Elegy*—it must be published by Dodsley at once—directions.

LETTER 72. GRAY TO WILLIAM MASON - - - - 166

Frequents the British Museum—readers there—the *Life of Clarendon*—London news.

LETTER 73. HORACE WALPOLE TO SIR HORACE MANN 168

The Cock Lane ghost—Lady Mary's return from Italy—her eccentricities.

LETTER 74. HORACE WALPOLE TO WILLIAM COLE - 170

The origin of *The Castle of Otranto*—Percy's *Reliques*—plans for his "bower".

LETTER 75. HORACE WALPOLE TO GRAY - - - 173

Remonstrances—the publication of Gray's *Poems* kept secret from him—has always admired Gray's writings.

LETTER 76. HORACE WALPOLE TO CHATTERTON - - 174

Obliged by Chatterton's kindness in submitting ancient MSS.—where are Rowley's poems to be found?—would like to print them—the discovery of oil-painting.

LETTER 77. HORACE WALPOLE TO WILLIAM COLE - 176

History of his relations with Chatterton—the "prematurity of Chatterton's genius" wonderful—but the construction of the poems modern.

LETTER 78. HORACE WALPOLE TO MISS BERRY - - 178

Out of touch with the present generation—Boswell's *Life*—Walpole's relations with Johnson's circle—refusal to subscribe to Johnson's monument—Burke's writings on the French Revolution.

LETTER 79. CHATTERTON TO HORACE WALPOLE - - 181

Offers "several curious Manuscripts" as bearing upon *Anecdotes of Painting*.

Page

LETTER 80. CHATTERTON TO HIS SISTER - - - 182

Describes his life and prospects in London—expects to write a history of London—stands well with the Lord Mayor—no money "on this side of the question"—his hopes from the Court party—may go to sea.

LETTER 81. SMOLLETT TO JOHN WILKES - - - 185

Asks his interest in freeing Francis Barber, negro servant to Dr. Johnson.

LETTER 82. GOLDSMITH TO DANIEL HODSON - - 187

His hardships in London—lives by physic and poetry—his affection for the old home and friends—his brother Charles—he will visit Ireland next summer.

LETTER 83. GOLDSMITH TO RALPH GRIFFITHS - - 190

A jail not formidable—he is no "sharper"—guilty of poverty only—his book soon to be published—Dr. Milner.

LETTER 84. GOLDSMITH TO BENNET LANGTON - - 192

Writing a comedy in the country — Reynolds — Beauclerc—Johnson — Burke — the *History of Animated Nature* — his abridged *History of England*,

LETTER 85. BURKE TO CHARLES TOWNSHEND - - 195

The *Letters of Junius*—"no fair man can believe me to be the author"—the malice of the ministry.

LETTER 86. BURKE TO SIR PHILIP FRANCIS - - - 197

Replies to strictures on his *Reflections*—no other friend willing to offer criticism—the Paris letter—is the book mischievous?—the French queen—Messalina—Hecuba—Burke's tears of pity—the "Revolution Society"—Dr. Price—Lord Shelburne.

LETTER 87. COWPER TO JOSEPH HILL - - - - 204

Housekeeping for two — the woollen-draper — *St. James's Chronicle* — public entertainments — a bad tenant — Colman—Bensley.

LETTER 88. COWPER TO JOSEPH HILL - - - - 207

Brydone's *Travels*—Gray—his letters compared with Swift's.

LETTER 89. COWPER TO WILLIAM UNWIN - - - 208

Johnson's *Life of Milton*—unfairness of his criticisms—*Lycidas*—the music of *Paradise Lost*.

LETTER 90. COWPER TO WILLIAM UNWIN - - - 210

The art of friendly correspondence—a familiar letter is like a journey.

Page

LETTER 91. COWPER TO JOHN NEWTON - - - 212

A rhyming epistle—Olney small talk—the Rev. Thomas Scott—Mrs. Jones' picnic—Cowper's purpose in writing *Charity*—"jigging" rhymes.

LETTER 92. COWPER TO WILLIAM UNWIN - - - 214

Wishes for a library—Johnson's *Lives*—best in narrative—*Alma* and *Hudibras*—"so little virtue" in authors—Pope—Addison—Dryden—Arbuthnot—Beattie.

LETTER 93. COWPER TO LADY HESKETH - - - 217

Poetry his mental remedy — carpentry and gardening — the story of Lady Austen—a review in the *Gentleman's Magazine*—translation of *Henriade*—the tame mouse.

LETTER 94. COWPER TO LADY HESKETH - - - 222

The lime walk at Weston—"five hundred celebrated authors now living"—Cowper accused of "neglecting method".

LETTER 95. COWPER TO SAMUEL ROSE - - - - 224

Wants a cuckoo clock "made in Germany"—Boswell's *Tour*—Johnson and Boswell both coxcombs.

LETTER 96. COWPER TO ANNE BODHAM - - - 225

Grateful for the portrait of his mother—the Donnes and the Cowpers—invites the Bodhams and other relations to Weston—room for five.

LETTER 97. COWPER TO LADY HESKETH - - - 229

Horace Walpole—Cowper's Welsh blood—nervous fever caused by nocturnal rowdies.

LETTER 98. COWPER TO MRS. COURTENAY - - - 230

His journey with Mrs. Unwin by Barnet and Kingston to Eartham—Hayley's pleasure-grounds.

LETTER 99. COWPER TO WILLIAM HAYLEY - - - 232

Sees Milton in dreamland—discusses *Paradise Lost*—a "dream of Pindus".

LETTER 100. COWPER TO LADY HESKETH - - - 234

Nature now a "universal blank"—his state of mind—"we shall meet no more".

LETTER 101. GIBBON TO HIS STEPMOTHER - - - 236

Proposes to visit her at Bath—the success of his first volume.

Page

LETTER 102. GIBBON TO HIS STEPMOTHER - - - 237

A playful note—reaches Andover "safe, well, and hungry".

LETTER 103. GIBBON TO LORD SHEFFIELD - - - 237

Preparing to leave for Switzerland—scenes at the trial of Warren Hastings.

LETTER 104. GIBBON TO LORD SHEFFIELD - - - 239

Sympathy on the death of Lady Sheffield—a friendship of twenty-three years—returning at once to England—will avoid the French Rhine—Severy's help.

LETTER 105. GIBBON TO LADY ELIZABETH FOSTER - 241

Describes the route of his return to England—sighs for her return.

LETTER 106. SHERIDAN TO JOHN KEMBLE - - - 244

Replies to Kemble's complaints—the management of Drury Lane Theatre.

LETTER 107. SHERIDAN TO CHARLES WARD - - - 245

Needs £10—Kean as Richard III—the hall of his house to be whitewashed—"great resources coming".

LETTER 108. SHERIDAN TO SAMUEL ROGERS - - 246

"Undone and brokenhearted"—bailiffs in the house.

LETTER 109. FANNY BURNEY TO HER SISTER SUSAN - 248

Evelina and the critics—a "torrent of success"—puzzling Daddy Crisp—who is the author?

LETTER 110. FANNY BURNEY TO SAMUEL CRISP - - 250

The kindness and gaiety of Mrs. Thrale and Dr. Johnson—Mrs. Thrale desires acquaintance with Mr. Crisp.

LETTER 111. FANNY BURNEY TO MRS. LOCK - - 252

The Queen's poultry—an offer to the Locks.

LETTER 112. MADAME D'ARBLAY TO DR. BURNEY - 253

The success of *Camilla*—surpasses that of *Evelina* and *Cecilia*—building a cottage—M. d'Arblay making a garden.

LETTER 113. CRABBE TO BURKE - - - - - - 256

An appeal—"without a friend, without employment, and without bread"—the story of his upbringing—Lord Rochford—a debt of £7—Burke's "humane and generous heart".

Page

LETTER 114. CRABBE TO SCOTT - - - - - - 259

Congratulates Scott on professional and literary success—describes his home in the Vale of Belvoir—belongs now to the "old race"—his two sons.

LETTER 115. SCOTT TO CRABBE - - - - - - 262

His first acquaintance with Crabbe's writings—extracts from *The Village* and *The Library*—anticipated the eulogy of the critics—proud of Crabbe's compliments—the jealousy of authors.

LETTER 116. BLAKE TO FLAXMAN - - - - - - 266

Arrival of the Blakes at Felpham—Hayley's "brotherly affection"—the journey from London—"another covering of earth shaken off"—Flaxman a "sublime archangel".

LETTER 117. BLAKE TO THOMAS BUTTS - - - 268

Preparing illustrations for Cowper's *Milton*—a memorial of Cowper—completing a "sublime allegory"—a definition of poetry—Hayley unsympathetic—"I know myself both Poet and Painter"—the commands of Blake's "spiritual friends".

LETTER 118. BURNS TO JOHN MURDOCH - - - 272

Gives account of his life and studies—"sent into the world to see and observe"—economical "in tavern matters"—his favourite authors.

LETTER 119. SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA - - - - 275

His knee bruised—unable to keep engagement—will seek her friendship "with the enthusiasm of religion".

LETTER 120. BURNS TO MRS. DUNLOP - - - - 276

His literary advisers—"Scottish themes and Scottish story"—hopes to clear by his poems "two or three hundred pounds"—will resume farming.

LETTER 121. BURNS TO ROBERT GRAHAM - - - 278

An inquiry threatened into his conduct—his "Revolution principles"—an appeal in the name of his wife and children.

LETTER 122. COLERIDGE TO SOUTHEY - - - - 280

Pantisocracy—its devotees—its critics—Southey's sonnets.

LETTER 123. COLERIDGE TO JOSEPH COTTLE - - 282

Asks the loan of a servant to go marketing.

Page

LETTER 124. COLERIDGE TO JOSEPH COTTLE - - 283

Chagrin at the loss of his friend and the collapse of Pantisocracy —in a "hedge of embarrassment"—composing as fast as possible.

LETTER 125. COLERIDGE TO JOSEPH COTTLE - - 285

At Racedown with Wordsworth—their two tragedies—opinions of Wordsworth.

LETTER 126. WORDSWORTH TO JOSEPH COTTLE - - 286

Rapidly adding to his stock of poetry—invites Cottle to hear it read.

LETTER 127. WORDSWORTH TO JOSEPH COTTLE - - 287

Business dealings—the sale of *Lyrical Ballads*—the effect of the *Ancient Mariner*—no residence yet in view.

LETTER 128. WORDSWORTH TO SIR GEORGE BEAUMONT 289

Biographical facts—financial details—profits from the *Lyrical Ballads*—legacies and a loan.

NOTES - - - - - - - - - - 293

APPENDIX - - - - - - - - - - 367

INTRODUCTION

To those concerned in the teaching of English literature it must be matter of continual wonder that, in recent schemes of higher education, so little use has been made of the English letter-writers. It is a simple matter of fact that our literature on this side is remarkably rich. If the student wishes to convince himself of this, he need only turn to the collected writings of Swift and Pope, of Walpole and Cowper, of Byron and Shelley. It would be difficult—one is inclined to use a stronger term—to find anywhere a body of correspondence that, in copiousness, variety, and high literary quality, could match the English letters of the Eighteenth Century—the golden age of the epistle. Leaving out of view such principal performers as Cicero and Pliny, we find no worthy rivals save only in the letter-writers of France. All the more surprising must it appear that, in the wide quest for masterpieces of pure and lively English, these ample treasures should have received so little attention.

In range of subject, English letters offer a complete gamut. Home life from cottage to palace,

household affairs from kitchen to drawing-room, human interests from cookery to philosophy, matters of discussion from village gossip to high politics, are all presented in profusion. No one who wishes to know his England can afford to disregard her well-stuffed postbag. A bundle like the *Paston Letters* is of first-rate significance for the study of the manners and customs of the Tudor period. The historian will find valuable material in collections such as that we owe to the keen eye and the ready pen of Walpole. But beyond all others will the student of our literature and its development find his account in a sympathetic study of the generations of this splendid succession.

In themselves, apart from their literary value, the English letter-writers supply delightful reading. Were William Cowper the veriest nonentity in literature—to allow oneself momentary contemplation of an unthinkable proposition—readers of taste would betake themselves again and again to his letters for their sheer humanity, as well as for their conversational charm. Take the well-known description of the visit of the parliamentary candidate. How slight is the incident; yet, in the telling of it, what an exquisite combination of ease and good-nature!

All really good letters have some of the fine gold of honest autobiography, for they sparkle with that priceless element, unmistakable yet indescribable, which we term personality. No letter-writer can completely hide this. Even Pope, in the manufactured articles sent to Lady Mary, cannot help

revealing something of himself. In our conception of a writer's mind, the perusal of a single one of his letters may produce a vast difference. Reading two or three of the short notes scribbled by Steele to his wife we get details for a mental portrait of Steele such as might be sought in vain from fifty essays of the *Tatler*.

What are the elements of a good letter? Mr. Herbert Paul is inclined to rate very high the letters of Lord Byron. Surveying the ground of his verdict, he finds it easier to state negations than to set down positive qualities. Byron "does not preach, or argue, or soliloquize, or refine. Egoist as he was, he never forgets his correspondent. His letters are not essays, or lectures, or leading articles, or even fragments of autobiography. They are just what they profess to be and nothing more. From the vice of discretion, which spoils so many letters, they are conspicuously free."[1] In these sentences one gets very near to the heart of the matter. "He never forgets his correspondent." A good letter is bound to be the product of at least two people. We should be as conscious of the reader as of the writer, and the personality of the silent partner should be as clearly felt as that of the one who holds the pen. For a good letter is the nearest approximation on paper to good conversation, and both parties stand in a measure revealed. The man who is writing has his correspondent in his mind's eye, shows himself aware of his opinions, and responds to his

[1] *Men and Letters* (The Art of Letter Writing).

interjections and protests. In Mr. Paul's bright phrase: "It takes two to write a letter, as it takes two to make a quarrel".

Success in this direction is the autumn fruit of a fine simplicity; and the secret is just naturalness. Swift knew the charm of the spontaneous epistle, and could boast of the habit of writing his letters at a spurt without lifting his elbow from the table.[1] The language of such unstudied intercourse is the most perfect medium of human expression; a prose with a vocabulary "arising out of repeated experience and regular feelings", such as Wordsworth sought in his "selection of language really used by men". This kind of homely tongue, "purified from all rational causes of dislike or disgust", Wordsworth held to be the proper garb for clothing the thoughts, incidents, and characters which make up that matter of unflagging interest —everyday life.

Human intimacy has never chosen a more unaffected speech than the chatter of Swift in his Journal to Stella. Open it where you will, you hear the voice of a man who tells exactly and unhesitatingly the thought of the moment. "I was this morning in town by ten, though it was shaving day." "The secretary showed me his bill of fare, to encourage me to dine with him. 'Poh,' said I, 'show me a bill of company, for I value not your dinner.'" The graver passages

[1] Cf. his letter to Lord Bathurst (Craik, *Life of Swift*, chap. xvii): "I swear your Lordship is the first person alive that ever made me lean upon my elbow when I was writing to him, and by consequence this will be the worst letter I ever writ".

are equally natural. Hear him tell of the death of his young protégé, Harrison. "I took Parnell this morning, and we walked to see poor Harrison. I had the hundred pounds in my pocket. I told Parnell I was afraid to knock at the door; my mind misgave me. I knocked, and his man in tears told me his master was dead an hour before. Think what grief this is to me!"

It was just such a ring of naturalness that Wordsworth would have liked to hear always in the flow of his own verse. To judge from his Prefaces, no writer ever gave more thought to this question of the perfect language. As a poet, he was scrupulous beyond almost all his predecessors in the handling of linguistic material, and lent a more attentive ear to the simple rhythms of the human heart. Over the conclusions he arrived at and sought to state in his Prefaces, much controversy has raged. Into this there is no need for us to enter. It is sufficient to note the supreme stress laid by Wordsworth on the literary value of unfettered naturalness in speech. The poetry which failed to echo the human talk of every day, failed also, in his estimation, to rise to literature's highest level. The prominence given —in his Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*—to rustics and their vocabulary has led some to imagine that he wished all literature to talk with a rural twang. Not so. Wordsworth's aim was complete escape from the dialect of any class. He sought to reach literary expression through simplicity's universal tongue. "It was not", as Professor Dowden

remarks with true feeling, "the language of the peasant, as such, that seemed admirable to him: it was the permanent and passionate speech of *man*, wherever to be found, which he sought after."

Coleridge, in his *Biographia Literaria*, has been at considerable pains to throw light upon his friend's doctrine. He shows that Wordsworth was moved by a deep dislike of "the false and showy splendour" of an artificial "poetic diction". It was this dislike that led him, by deliberate selection and rejection, to follow the quest of the "language of nature"—"a language", in the interpreting phrase of Coleridge, "which actually constitutes the natural conversation of men under the influence of natural feelings".

The literature of the Nineteenth Century owes an incalculable debt to this solitary and heroic labour of the great Lake Poet. Yet it is not too much to say that the goal achieved by Wordsworth had been reached before him by one or two of our best Eighteenth Century letter-writers. They had found the "language of nature". Without conscious effort, they had taught the English world this artless and straightforward speech. This was the tongue of Cowper. It was the tongue of Swift at his best. Steele knew its secret. It was the tongue even of Pope himself, when he wrote to Martha Blount. Never has literary English more completely identified itself with "the natural conversation of men" than in much of the correspondence of these writers: yet, in their poetry to a large extent and in their formal prose, they

would probably have been regarded by Wordsworth in 1798 as the champions of an alien school.

It would be difficult to find in English prose a fitter practical exposition of the Wordsworthian doctrine than one of Cowper's delightful pages in his letters to William Unwin or to Lady Hesketh. A hundred instances might be selected. Take one from a letter to William Unwin (Sept. 21, 1779). "I have eight pair of tame pigeons. When I first enter the garden in the morning, I find them perched upon the wall, waiting for their breakfast; for I feed them always upon the gravel walk. If your wish should be accomplished, and you should find yourself furnished with the wings of a dove, I shall undoubtedly find you amongst them."

Most of us would probably agree that the speech of the average man is heard to best advantage in narration. Along this line we reach another reliable test of epistolary excellence. The good letter-writer and the good storyteller are alike. Both are unaffected; both are above all things direct. On the part of neither is there any time spent in foraging about for spangled epithets or coloured phrases. Each despises fancy work, unless it comes in the way of nature. Many of the best of our English letters are narrative in form and content. Classical instances are Swift's accounts to Stella of the duel between the Duke of Hamilton and Lord Mohun and of the stabbing of Harley by the Marquis de Guiscard; with Cowper's inimitable narrative, given to Lady Hesketh, of his friendship with Lady Austen, not to speak of the visit of the

candidate or the chase after the runaway hare. In letters of this high level the writer sinks out of view. He is simply a voice; or a sort of tragic chorus. The narrative grows vividly objective. Listen to Steele. "The Duke was helped towards the cake-house by the ring in Hyde Park—where they fought—and died on the grass, before he could reach the house; and was brought home in his coach by eight, while the poor Duchess was asleep." If we stop at all to criticise in passages like this, we have to confess that the writer's aim has been "truth to nature" rather than "truth to art"; and, if the latter quality is present, it is there simply as the direct outcome of the former. This sinewy directness is the very essence of all good storytelling. Among the moderns, no one has practised it with more studious craft than R. L. Stevenson. Coleridge, consummate master of narrative in verse, could fail dismally in prose. "In the warmth of the approaching midday, as I was reposing in the vast cavern, out of which, from its northern portal, issues the river that winds through our vale, a voice powerful, yet not from its loudness, suddenly hailed me" (*The Friend*, Essay I). Who would listen for two seconds to a tale beginning like that? Before the teller got to the mysterious voice, the listener would have left a button in his clutch and wrenched himself free.

Another and a cardinal condition of good letter writing is the assumption by both correspondents of perfect equality. Whatever difference of rank or estate there may be, such difference is disre-

garded, and they look on each other for the time being as fellows. Professor Dowden, in the essay already quoted, marks as a refreshing characteristic of Wordsworth's poetry "its entire freedom from condescension". In his dealings with his rustics and shepherds, he is altogether free from any "air of sentimental or of humorous superiority". The humanity which goes to the making of a good letter shows itself in courtesy of this delicate kind. It is that form of self-respect which makes us reverence all mankind. Swift can write to Lord Bolingbroke simply as man to man. Gibbon and Lord Sheffield in their letters know nothing of social barriers. It ought to have been the case with Gray and Horace Walpole, but it was not; and an opportunity for the growth of a rare correspondence was lost to the world. They were chums at Eton and at Cambridge. They went together from the University to the Continent. All the outward signs promised a lifelong friendship. But apparently Walpole, possibly on the ground of his wealth, assumed a tone that Gray could not brook. After travelling for two years together they quarrelled bitterly; and, though the breach was afterwards healed, intimate correspondence ceased.

It is this tacit acknowledgment of equality that leads to the pleasantest of all good letters, those that give the chit-chat of gossips—letters written in undress. No communication can charm us more or give us fuller assurance of real friendship than a colloquial epistle, such as flowed freely from the pen of Cowper or Lamb or Byron in the mo-

ments of pure ease. In this kind of intercourse, all convention and all insincerity break down and disappear without a trace. Cowper and Lamb had this grace of irresponsible prattle beyond all our great writers. It was unfortunately denied to Gray, who otherwise would have found his place in that charming circle by the cosy fireside, whose written talk is one of the undiluted joys of our literature.

It follows from what has just been said, that a good letter is one written without a thought of publication. As soon as the vision of the general public or of the circle of waiting critics rises to form a background to one's correspondent, simplicity and ease must vanish. It is not honest but dishonest egoism that spoils the epistle. Several of our great letter writers undoubtedly framed their sentences to satisfy a mass of readers more or less distant. Letters of this sort carry always the smell of the lamp. Lady Mary had the goal of publicity constantly in sight. The English world was the real audience of much that Pope committed privately to his literary friends. When he wrote to Martha Blount that world was forgotten; and his letters to her have an ease unknown to all the rest of his correspondence. Walpole certainly looked to posterity, while seeming only to address an acquaintance. Such a double outlook inevitably brings with it a note of insincerity. Altogether different from such studied efforts are the effusions of Cowper and Gibbon and Fanny Burney, of Byron and Macaulay. It would be very difficult

to find in the letters of any one of these a single example of show-off or of deliberately fine writing. The really good letter has very little in common with the essay: and much of the correspondence of our chief letter-writers are unequivocal essays. How vastly the true letter diverges from formal prose prepared for the general gaze can be well seen in the correspondence of giants like Gibbon and Macaulay, whose letters differ from their histories as the ballad differs from the epic.

We have glanced at the ministry of letters in revealing the true nature of the writer. Even the scribbler cannot altogether conceal his personality. In this respect letters come to the aid of the student and make possible fresh and unexpected verdicts. Some of the masters of our literature would be subject to utter misconception, but for the happy chance of their letters surviving and telling us much that they never tried or even wished to make public. No better instance could be found than Swift. The terrible Dean wore to the world a mask of reserve which he would, if his own taste had been consulted, have carried to the grave. He might have remained, even to the student, the furious misanthropist whose rôle he persistently played. Bolingbroke, who knew his real nature, said of him that he was a "hypocrite reversed". He wanted men to think him savage and cynical. He tried his best to achieve this result, but happily tried in vain. The love of those who knew him defeated his great scheme; and the letters they gave to the world after his death disclose to us the secret

Swift—the man under the iron mask. Gibbon, too, would be to-day a quite different and much less attractive personality in our literature, if we knew him only as the historian. He compiled an elaborate autobiography of which no less than seven separate revisions were prepared by his own hand. Within recent years, however, a collection of his letters has been published by the Sheffield family, and a new Gibbon has come to light—a Gibbon who could amuse his correspondents with the playful lively talk of unaffected learning. Written without a thought of anyone but himself and his two chief correspondents—Lord Sheffield and his stepmother—they chatter artlessly and fill us with kindly affection for one, whom otherwise we should have said to be as unlikely an object of sentiment as a Greek statue. Dr. Johnson's letter to his dying mother fills the reader with a strange tenderness for the rough hand that penned it, and rounds off what would else be an unfinished portrait of the great literary dictator.

Many such pleasant surprises await the student of English letters. He is setting out to traverse a country of rare and varied delights. Men and events in the storied past of our literature will wear a new face and form for him, as he views them at a closer range and in the genial light of intimacy. It is a thousand pities that in high schools and colleges, where our literature is set down for extensive study, so little opportunity should be given for exploring this almost unknown territory of our goodly heritage.

ENGLISH LETTERS

EDMUND SPENSER

1552–1599

Letter 1. Edmund Spenser to Sir Walter Raleigh

"In affecting the ancients, he writ no language," was Ben Jonson's verdict on Spenser's daring treatment of English in his *Faery Queen*. From his study of Chaucer, Spenser, both in vocabulary and in grammar, revised and adopted with lordly freedom. In taking advantage of the still fluid state of the tongue, he abused his liberty. Simply to suit metre or rhyme, a word was clipped or altered, or a corrupt pronunciation selected. That these outrages were gratuitous is clear from the pure diction of the *Prothalamion* and from his prose. How Spenser could combine language and melody to a perfect prose is illustrated by this letter. It was written, on Raleigh's own suggestion, when the first part of the *Faery Queen* was printed, in order to exhibit the outline of the poem as a whole: "a clumsy expedient," Dean Church calls it, "telling us what the poem ought to have told us". As the work was left incomplete, the plan of the whole would, but for this letter, have remained in conjecture. Happily Spenser has here left us a glimpse of the goal he had meant to reach.

January 23, 1589.

Sir,—

Knowing how doubtfully all Allegories may be construed, and this book of mine, which I have entitled *The Faery Queen*, being a continued

Allegory, or dark conceit, I have thought good, as well for avoiding of jealous opinions and misconstructions, as also for your better light in reading thereof, (being so by you commanded) to discover unto you the general intention and meaning, which in the whole course thereof I have fashioned, without expressing of any particular purposes, or by accidents, therein occasioned. The general end therefore of all the book is to fashion a gentleman or noble person in virtuous and gentle discipline: which for that I conceived should be most plausible and pleasing, being coloured with an historical fiction, the which the most part of men delight to read, rather for variety of matter than for profit of the ensample, I chose the history of king Arthur, as most fit for the excellency of his person, being made famous by many men's former works, and also furthest from the danger of envy, and suspicion of present time. In which I have followed all the antique poets historical: first Homer, who in the persons of Agamemnon and Ulysses hath ensampled a good governor and a virtuous man, the one in his Ilias, the other in his Odysseis: then Virgil, whose like intention was to do in the person of Æneas: after him Ariosto comprised them both in his Orlando: and lately Tasso dissevered them again, and formed both parts in two persons, namely that part which they in philosophy call *Ethic*, or virtues of a private man, coloured in his Rinaldo; the other named *Politic*, in his Godfredo. By ensample of which excellent Poets, I labour to portray in Arthur, before he was king, the image of a brave knight, perfected in the twelve private moral virtues, as Aristotle hath devised; the which is the purpose of these

first twelve books: which if I find to be well accepted, I may be perhaps encouraged to frame the other part of politic virtues in his person, after he came to be king.

To some, I know, this method will seem displeasant, which had rather have good discipline delivered plainly in way of precepts, or sermoned at large, as they use, than thus cloudily enwrapped in allegorical devices. But such, me seem, should be satisfied with the use of these days, seeing all things accounted by their shows, and nothing esteemed of, that is not delightful and pleasing to common sense. For this cause is Xenophon preferred before Plato, for that the one, in the exquisite depth of his judgment, formed a Commonwealth, such as it should be; but the other in the person of Cyrus, and the Persians, fashioned a government, such as might best be: so much more profitable and gracious is doctrine by ensample, than by rule. So have I laboured to do in the person of Arthur: whom I conceive, after his long education by Timon, (to whom he was by Merlin delivered to be brought up, so soon as he was born of the Lady Igrayne) to have seen in a dream or vision the Faery Queen, with whose excellent beauty ravished, he awaking resolved to seek her out: and so being by Merlin armed, and by Timon thoroughly instructed, he went to seek her forth in Faery land. In that Faery Queen I mean Glory in my general intention, but in my particular I conceive the most excellent and glorious person of our sovereign the Queen, and her Kingdom in Faery land. And yet, in some places else, I do otherwise shadow her. For considering she beareth two persons,

the one of a most royal Queen or Empress, the other of a most virtuous and beautiful lady, this latter part in some places I do express in Belphoebe, fashioning her name according to your own excellent conceit of Cynthia (Phoebe and Cynthia being both names of Diana). So in the person of Prince Arthur I set forth Magnificence in particular; which virtue, for that (according to Aristotle and the rest) it is the perfection of all the rest, and containeth in it them all, therefore in the whole course I mention the deeds of Arthur applicable to that virtue, which I write of in that book. But of the xii other virtues I make xii other knights the patrons, for the more variety of the history: of which these three books contain three.

The first, of the Knight of the Red-cross, in whom I express Holiness: the second of Sir Guyon, in whom I set forth Temperance: the third of Britomartis, a Lady knight, in whom I picture Chastity. But, because the beginning of the whole work seemeth abrupt, and as depending upon other antecedents, it needs that ye know the occasion of these three knights' several adventures. For the method of a Poet historical is not such, as of an Historiographer. For an Historiographer discourseth of affairs orderly as they were done, accounting as well the times as the actions; but a Poet thrusteth into the midst, even where it most concerneth him, and there recoursing to the things forepast, and divining of things to come, maketh a pleasing analysis of all.

The beginning therefore of my history, if it were to be told by an Historiographer should be the twelfth book, which is the last; where I devise

that the Faery Queen kept her Annual feast twelve days; upon which twelve several days, the occasions of the twelve several adventures happened, which, being undertaken by twelve several knights, are in these twelve books severally handled and discoursed. The first was this. In the beginning of the feast, there presented himself a tall clownish young man, who falling before the Queen of Faeries desired a boon (as the manner then was) which during that feast she might not refuse; which was that he might have the achievement of any adventure, which during that feast should happen: that being granted, he rested him on the floor, unfit through his rusticity for a better place. Soon after entered a fair Lady in mourning weeds, riding on a white ass, with a dwarf behind her leading a warlike steed, that bore the arms of a knight, and his spear in the dwarf's hand. She, falling before the Queen of Faeries, complained that her father and mother, an ancient king and queen, had been by an huge dragon many years shut up in a brazen castle, who thence suffered them not to issue; and therefore besought the Faery Queen to assign her some one of her knights to take on him that exploit. Presently that clownish person, upstarting, desired that adventure; whereat the Queen much wondering, and the Lady much gainsaying, yet he earnestly importuned his desire. In the end the Lady told him, that unless that armour which she brought, would serve him (that is, the armour of a Christian man specified by Saint Paul, vi Ephes.) that he could not succeed in that enterprise; which being forthwith put upon him with due furnitures thereunto, he seemed the goodliest man in all that

company, and was well liked of the Lady. And eftsoons taking on him knighthood, and mounting on that strange courser, he went forth with her on that adventure: where beginneth the first book, viz.

A gentle knight was pricking on the playne, etc.

The second day there came in a Palmer, bearing an Infant with bloody hands, whose parents he complained to have been slain by an enchantress called Acrasia; and therefore craved of the Faery Queen, to appoint him some knight to perform that adventure; which being assigned to Sir Guyon, he presently went forth with that same Palmer: which is the beginning of the second book and the whole subject thereof. The third day there came in a Groom, who complained before the Faery Queen, that a vile Enchanter, called Busirane, had in hand a most fair Lady, called Amoretta, whom he kept in most grievous torment, because she would not yield him the pleasure of her body. Whereupon Sir Scudamour, the lover of that Lady, presently took on him that adventure. But being unable to perform it by reason of the hard enchantments, after long sorrow, in the end met with Britomartis, who succoured him, and rescued his love.

But by occasion hereof many other adventures are intermeddled; but rather as Accidents than intendments: as the love of Britomart, the overthrow of Marinell, the misery of Florimell, the virtuousness of Belphoebe, the lasciviousness of Hellenora, and many the like.

This much, Sir, I have briefly overrun to direct your understanding to the well-head of the History;

that from thence gathering the whole intention of the conceit, ye may as in a handful grip all the discourse, which otherwise may happily seem tedious and confused. So, humbly craving the continuance of your honourable favour towards me, and th' eternal establishment of your happiness, I humbly take leave.

Yours most humbly affectionate,

EDM. SPENSER.

SIR WALTER RALEIGH

1552–1618

LETTER 2. SIR WALTER RALEIGH TO SIR WALTER COPE

On the accession of James I, the brilliant Raleigh lost favour and stood his trial for treason on the charge of inviting Spain to invade England and to establish Popery. Sir Edward Coke, then Attorney-General, showed by his coarse epithets ("spider of hell" among others), in prosecuting, how an eminent jurist could be a forensic bully. Condemned to death on slight evidence, Raleigh was reprieved on the scaffold and consigned to the Tower at the King's pleasure. Here he spent, as a rule under easy conditions, twelve and a half years. Realizing the fruitlessness of his appeals for pardon, he began the achievement of his captivity, *The History of the World* (published 1614). His durance was softened by the presence of his wife; but in 1610 she was separated from him, and, on the ground of a new charge, he was confined with rigour for some weeks. This hardship was the origin of the letter to his friend Cope. Though James I had a strong antipathy for Raleigh, Prince Henry remained an admirer and friend till his death in 1612, and correspondence between the two remains.

October the 9 [1610?].

SIR WALTER COPE,—

You are of my old acquaintance, and were my familiar friend for many years, in which time

I hope you cannot say that ever I used any unkind office towards you. But our fortunes are now changed, and it may be in your power greatly to bind me unto you, if the binding of a man in my estate be worth anything. My desire unto you is, that you will be pleased to move my Lord Treasurer in my behalf, that by his grace my wife might again be made a prisoner with me, as she hath been for six years last past. She being now divided from me, and thereby, to my great impoverishing, I am driven to keep two houses. A miserable fate it is, and yet great to me, who, in this wretched estate, can hope for no other thing than peaceable sorrow. It is now, and I call the Lord of all power to witness it. I ever have been and am resolved that it was never in the worthy heart of Sir Robert Cecil (whatsoever a Councellor of State and a Lord Treasurer of England must do) to suffer me to fall, much less to perish. For whatsoever terms it hath pleased his Lordship to use towards me, which might utterly despair anybody else, yet I know that he spake them as a Councellor sitting in Council, and in company of such as would not otherwise have been satisfied.

But, as God liveth, I would have bought his presence at a far dearer rate than those sharp words and these three months' close imprisonment, for it is in his Lordship's face and countenance that I behold all that remains to me of comfort and all the hope I have, and from which I shall never be beaten till I see the last of evils and the despair which hath no help. The blessings of God cannot make him cruel that was never so, nor prosperity teach any man of so great worth to delight in the endless adversity of an enemy,

much less of him who in his very soul and nature can never be such a one towards him.

Sir, the matter is of no great importance (though a cruel destiny hath made it so to me) to desire that my wife may live with me in this unsavoury place. If by your mediation I may obtain it, I will acknowledge it in the highest degree of thankfulness; and rest ready in true faith to be commanded by you.

W. Ralegh.

SIR PHILIP SIDNEY

1554–1586

Letter 3. Sir Philip Sidney to his Brother Robert

In 1580, after a time of seclusion in the country, Sidney came back with his uncle, the Earl of Leicester, to the Court of Elizabeth. His brother Robert, afterwards Lord Leicester, was travelling on the Continent and, spending extravagantly, was often in money troubles. His father refusing to "enlarge one groat" on his allowance, Robert sought help of Philip. Philip sent him sound brotherly advice and, as their correspondence reveals, more than brotherly help. This letter is valuable for the light it throws on the writer's mind and the things he deemed worth study. Many of the thoughts, as Mr. Shuckburgh points out, suggest those of the *Apologie for Poetrie*. The functions of the historian, of the philosopher, and of the poet are outlined in similar style and spirit. It is clear from the letter that many subjects handled in the *Apologie* (published 1595) were already taking shape in Sidney's serious mind.

My dear Brother,—

For the money you have received, assure yourself (for it is true) there is nothing I spend so pleaseth me, as that which is for you. If ever I

have ability, you will find it; if not, yet shall not any other brother living be better beloved than you of me. I cannot write now to N. White, do you excuse me. For his nephew, they are but passions in my father which we must bear with reverence; but I am sorry he should return till he had the circuit of his travel, for you shall never have such a servant as he would prove; use your own discretion therein. For your countenance I would for no cause have it diminished in Germany; in Italy your greatest expense must be upon worthy men, and not upon householding. Look to your diet (sweet Robin) and hold up your heart in courage and virtue; truly great part of my comfort is in you. I know not myself what I meant by bravery in you, so greatly you may see I condemn you; be careful of yourself, and I shall never have cares. I have written to Mr. Savile; I wish you kept still together, he is an excellent man; and there may, if you list, pass good exercise betwixt you and Mr. Nevyle, there is a great expectation of you both. For the method of writing history, Boden hath written at large; you may read him, and gather out of many words some matter. This I think in haste; a story is either to be considered as a story, or as a treatise, which, besides that, addeth many things for profit and ornament. As a story, he is nothing but a narration of things done, with the beginnings, causes, and appendances thereof; in that kind your method must be to have *seriem temporum* very exactly, which the Chronologies of Melancthon, Tarchagnora, Languet, and such other, will help you to. Then to consider by that . . . Xenophon to follow Thucydides, so

doth Thucydides follow Herodotus, and Diodorus Siculus follow Xenophon: so generally do the Roman stories follow the Greek, and the particular stories of present monarchies follow the Roman. In that kind your have principally to note the examples of virtue or vice, with their good or evil successes; the establishments or ruins of great estates, with the causes, the time, and circumstances of the laws then wrote of; the enterings and endings of wars, and therein, the stratagems against the enemy, and the discipline upon the soldier; and thus much as a very historiographer. Besides this, the historian makes himself a discourser for profit; and an orator, yea a poet, sometimes for ornament. An orator, in making excellent orations, *e re nata*, which are to be marked, but marked with the note of rhetorical remembrances: a poet, in painting forth the effects, the motions, the whisperings of the people, which though in disputation, one might say were true, yet who will mark them well, shall find them taste of a poetical vein, and in that kind are gallantly to be marked; for though perchance they were not so, yet it is enough they might be so. The last point which tends to teach profit, is of a discourser, which name I give to whosoever speaks, *Non simpliciter de facto, sed de qualitatibus et circumstantiis facti*; and that is it which makes me and many others, rather note much with our pen than with our mind, because we leave all these discourses to the confused trust of our memory, because they being not tied to the tenor of a question, as philosophers use sometimes places; the divine, in telling his opinion and reasons in religion; sometimes the lawyer, in

showing the causes and benefits of laws; sometimes a natural philosopher, in setting down the causes of any strange thing, which the story binds him to speak of; but most commonly a moral philosopher, either in the ethic part, when he sets forth virtues or vices, and the natures of passions, or in the politic, when he doth (as often he doth) meddle sententiously with matters of estate. Again, sometimes he gives precept of war, both offensive and defensive; and so, lastly, not professing any art, as his matter leads him he deals with all arts, which because it carrieth the life of a lively example, it is wonderful what light it gives to the arts themselves, so as the great civilians help themselves with the discourses of the historians; so do soldiers, and even philosophers and astronomers. But that I wish herein is this, that when you read any such thing, you straight bring it to his head, not only of what art, but by your logical subdivisions, to the next member and parcel of the art. And so as in a table, be it witty words, of which Tacitus is full; sentences, of which Livy, or similitudes, whereof Plutarch; straight to lay it up in the right place of his storehouse, as either military, or more specially defensive military, or more particularly defensive by fortification, and so lay it up. So likewise in politic matters, and such a little table you may easily make, wherewith I would have you ever join the historical part, which is only the example of some stratagem, or good counsel, or such like. This write I to you in great haste, of method without method, but with more leisure and study (if I do not find some book that satisfies) I will venture to write more largely of it unto you. Mr.

Savile will with ease help you to set down such a table of remembrance to yourself, and for your sake I perceive he will do much, and if ever I be able, I will deserve it of him; one only thing, as it comes into my mind, let me remember you of, that you consider wherein the historian excelleth, and that to note, as Dion Nicæus, in searching the secrets of government; Tacitus, in the pithy opening the venom of wickedness, and so of the rest. My time, exceedingly short, will suffer me to write no more leisurely; Stephen can tell you who stands with me while I am writing. Now (dear brother) take delight likewise in the mathematicals; Mr. Savile is excellent in them. I think you understand the sphere, if you do, I care little for any more astronomy in you. Arithmetic and geometry, I would wish you well seen in, so as both in matter of number and measure you might have a feeling and active judgment; I would you did bear the mechanical instruments, wherein the Dutch excel. I write this to you as one, that for myself have given over the delight in the world, but wish to you as much, if not more, than to myself. So you can speak and write Latin, not barbarously, I never require great study in Ciceronianism, the chief abuse of Oxford, *qui dum verba sectantur, res ipsas negligunt.* My toyful books I will send, with God's help, by February, at which time you shall have your money: and for £200 a year, assure yourself, if the estates of England remain, you shall not fail of it; use it to your best profit. My lord of Leicester sends you forty pounds, as I understand by Stephen, and promiseth he will continue that stipend yearly at the least, then that is above

commons; in any case write largely and diligently unto him, for in troth, I have good proof that he means to be every way good unto you; the odd £30 shall come with the hundred, or else my father and I will jarl. Now, sweet brother, take a delight to keep and increase your music; you will not believe what a want I find of it in my melancholy times. At horsemanship, when you exercise it, read Crison Claudio, and a book that is called *La Gloria del' Cavallo*, withal that you may join the thorough contemplation of it with the exercise; and so shall you profit more in a month, than others in a year, and mark the bitting, saddling, and curing of horses. I would by the way your worship would learn a better hand; you write worse than I, and I write evil enough; once again have a care of your diet, and consequently of your complexion; remember *gratior est veniens in pulchro corpore virtus*. Now sir for news, I refer myself to this bearer, he can tell you how idle we look on our neighbours' fires, and nothing has happened notable at home, save only Drake's return, of which yet I know not the secret points; but about the world he hath been, and rich he is returned. Portugal we say is lost, and to conclude, my eyes are almost closed up, overwatched with tedious business. God bless you, sweet boy, and accomplish the joyful hope I conceive of you. Once again commend me to Mr. Nevyle, Mr. Savile, and honest Harry White, and bid him be merry. When you play at weapons, I would have you get thick caps and brasers, and play out your play lustily, for indeed ticks and dalliances are nothing in earnest, for the time of the one and the other greatly differs;

and use as well the blow as the thrust; it is good in itself, and besides exerciseth your breath and strength, and will make you a strong man at the tourney and barriers. First, in any case practise the single sword, and then with the dagger; let no day pass without an hour or two such exercise; the rest study, or confer diligently, and so shall you come home to my comfort and credit. Lord! how I have babbled: once again farewell dearest brother. Your most loving and careful brother,

PHILIP SYDNEY.

At Leicester House,
the 18th of October, 1580.

FRANCIS BACON

1561–1626

LETTER 4. FRANCIS BACON TO SIR EDWARD COKE

Few personalities in literature fascinate by their intricacy more than Francis Bacon. Wielding a trenchant English style, he preferred Latin as the "general language", doubting the stability of "these modern languages". Bacon charmed as a speaker, and his letters hold us like bright talk. "No man", said Ben Jonson (a critic hard to please), "ever spoke more neatly, more pressly. His hearers could not look aside from him without loss. The fear of every man that heard him was that he should make an end." Bacon's letters are all worthy of study. Apart from the excellence of their matter, we get light thrown on Bacon's other writings, on the workings of his mind, on the facts of his own history and that of his age.

At the Bar, Bacon's great rival was the learned Edward Coke, who in 1594 secured the coveted post of Attorney-General. Bacon's claims at the time were strongly pressed by Essex; but even the appointment of Solicitor-General was denied to Bacon, owing, as he thought, to Coke's in-

trigues. Bacon had his revenge in 1613, when he secured Coke's "penal promotion" from his lucrative presidency of the Common Pleas to the sparer dignity of Chief Justice, while he himself became Attorney-General. "This is all your doing," challenged the angry Coke. "Ah, my lord," was the mocking retort, "your lordship has all this time grown in breadth; you must needs now grow in height, else you will become a monster." Coke's dismissal by the King took place in November, 1616, Bacon's tragic fall in May, 1621.

[? *April*, 1601.]

MR. ATTORNEY,—

I thought best, once for all, to let you know in plainness what I find of you, and what you shall find of me. You take to yourself a liberty to disgrace and disable my law, my experience, my discretion. What it pleaseth you, I pray, think of me: I am one that knows both mine own wants and other men's; and it may be, perchance, that mine mend, and others stand at a stay. And surely I may not endure in public place to be wronged, without repelling the same to my best advantage to right myself. You are great, and therefore have the more enviers, which would be glad to have you paid at another's cost. Since the time I missed the Solicitor's place (the rather I think by your means) I cannot expect that you and I shall ever serve as Attorney and Solicitor together: but either to serve with another upon your remove, or to step into some other course; so as I am more free than ever I was from any occasion of unworthy conforming myself to you, more than general good manners or your particular good usage shall provoke. And if you had not been short-sighted in your own fortune (as I think) you might have had more use of me. But that tide is passed.

I write not this to shew my friends what a brave letter I have written to Mr. Attorney; I have none of those humours. But that I have written is to a good end, that is to the more decent carriage of my mistress' service, and to our particular better understanding one of another. This letter, if it shall be answered by you in deed, and not in word, I suppose it will not be worse for us both. Else it is but a few lines lost, which for a much smaller matter I would have adventured. So this being but to yourself, I for myself rest.

Letter 5. Francis Bacon to Sir George Villiers

John Burgess (1563–1635), a leading Puritan divine, preaching before the King at Greenwich, June, 1604, roused James's ire by his criticism of the ceremonies newly prescribed for the Church. After a short period in the Tower he was silenced, and went to study medicine in Leyden, securing subsequently the degree of doctor of physic from Cambridge. Forbidden by the King to practise in London, he established himself at Isleworth in Middlesex. Among his patients was Lucy, Countess of Bedford, who interceded at Court on his behalf, securing the help of Bacon. This letter to the royal favourite Villiers was the result. There is no evidence that the benchers chose Burgess, but at the end of 1616 he was elected to a preachership at Bishopsgate, and in 1617 got a living in Warwickshire. Bacon, ever tolerant and humane, kept clear of the bitter ecclesiastical controversies of his day, but, as this letter shows, was always ready to foster a reconciliation.

[1616.]

Sir,—

There is a particular wherein I think you may do yourself honour, which as I am informed hath been laboured by my lady of Bedford and put in a good way by the Bishop of Bath and Wells, concerning the restoring to preach of a

famous preacher, one Doctor Burgess: who though he hath been silenced a great time, yet he hath now made such a submission touching his conformity, as giveth satisfaction. It is much desired also by Gray's Inn (if he shall be free from the State) to choose him for their preacher; and certainly it is safer to place him there than in another auditory, because he will be well watched, if he should anyways fly forth in his sermons beyond duty. This may seem a trifle; but I do assure you, in opening this man's mouth to preach, ye shall open very many mouths to speak honour of you; and I confess I would have a full cry of Puritans, of Papists, of all the world to speak well of you; and besides I am persuaded (which is above all earthly glory) you shall do God good service in it. I pray deal with His Majesty in it. I rest

Your devoted and bounden servant,

FR. BACON.

LETTER 6. FRANCIS BACON TO JAMES I

[1622.]

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY,

In the midst of my misery, which is rather assuaged by remembrance than by hope, my chiefest wordly comfort is to think, that, since the time I had the first vote of the Lower House of Parliament for Commissioner of the Union, until the time that I was this last Parliament chosen by both Houses for their messenger to your Majesty in the petition of religion (which two were my first and last services), I was evermore so happy as to

have my poor services graciously accepted by your Majesty, and likewise not to have had any of them miscarry in my hands. Neither of which points I can anywise take to myself; but ascribe the former to your Majesty's goodness, and the latter to your prudent directions; which I was ever careful to have and keep. For, as I have often said to your Majesty, I was towards you but as a bucket, and a cistern; to draw forth and conserve; whereas yourself was the fountain. Unto this comfort of nineteen years' prosperity, there succeeded a comfort even in my greatest adversity, somewhat of the same nature; which is, that in those offences wherewith I was charged, there was not any one that had special relation to your Majesty, or any your particular commandments. For as towards Almighty God there are offences against the first and second table, and yet all against God; so with the servants of kings, there are offences more immediate against the sovereign; although all offences against law are also against the King. Unto which comfort there is added this circumstance, that as my faults were not against your Majesty, otherwise than as all faults are; so my fall was not your Majesty's act, otherwise than as all acts of justice are yours. This I write not to insinuate with your Majesty, but as a most humble appeal to your Majesty's gracious remembrance, how honest and direct you have ever found me in your service; whereby I have an assured belief, that there is in your Majesty's own princely thoughts a great deal of serenity and clearness towards me, your Majesty's now prostrate and cast-down servant.

Neither (my most gracious sovereign) do I, by

this mention of my services, lay claim to your princely grace and bounty, though the privileges of calamity do bear that form of petition. I know well, had they been much more, they had been but by bounden duty. Nay I must also confess, that they were, from time to time, far above my merit over and super-rewarded by your Majesty's benefits which you heaped upon me. Your Majesty was and is that master to me, that raised and advanced me nine times; thrice in dignity, and six times in office. The places indeed were the painfullest of all your services; but then they had both honour and profits. And the then profits might have maintained my now honour, if I had been wise. Neither was your Majesty's immediate liberality wanting towards me in some gifts, if I may hold them. All this I do most thankfully acknowledge, and do herewith conclude, that for anything arising from myself to move your eye of pity towards me, there is much more in my present misery than in my past services; save that the same, your Majesty's goodness, that may give relief to the one, may give value to the other.

And indeed, if it may please your Majesty, this theme of my misery is so plentiful as it need not be coupled with anything else. I have been somebody by your Majesty's singular and undeserved favour; even the prime officer of your kingdom. Your Majesty's arm hath been often over mine in council when you presided at the table; so near I was: I have borne your Majesty's image in metal; much more in heart. I was never, in sixteen years' service, chidden by your Majesty; but, contrariwise, often overjoyed when your Majesty would sometimes say, I was a good

husband for you, though none for myself; sometimes, that I had a way to deal in business, *suavibus modis*, which was the way was most according to your own heart; and other most gracious speeches of affection and trust, which I feed on till this day. But why should I speak of these things which are now vanished? but only the better to express my downfall.

For now it is thus with me: I am a year and a half old in misery: though I must ever acknowledge, not without some mixtures of your Majesty's grace and mercy; for I do not think it possible that any one, that you once loved, should be totally miserable. Mine own means, through mine own improvidence, are poor and weak, little better than my father left me. The grants which I have had from your Majesty are either in question, or at courtesy. My dignities remain marks of your favour, but burdens of my present fortune. The poor remnants which I had of my former fortunes, in plate or jewels, I have spread upon poor men unto whom I owed, scarce leaving myself bread. So as, to conclude, I must pour out my misery before your Majesty, so far as to say, *Si deseris tu, perimus.*

But as I can offer to your Majesty's compassion little arising from myself to move you, except it be my extreme misery, which I have truly laid open; so looking up to your Majesty yourself, I should think I committed Cain's fault, if I should despair. Your Majesty is a king whose heart is as inscrutable for secret motions of goodness, as for depth of wisdom. You are Creator-like, Factive, and not Destructive. You are the prince in whom I have ever noted an aversation against anything that

savoured of an hard heart; as on the other side, your princely eye was wont to meet with any motion that was made on the relieving part. Therefore as one that hath had the happiness to know your Majesty nearhand, I have (most gracious Sovereign) faith enough for a miracle, much more for a grace, that your Majesty will not suffer your poor creature to be utterly defaced, nor blot that name quite out of your book, upon which your sacred hand hath been so oft for new ornaments and additions.

Unto this degree of compassion, I hope God above (of whose mercies towards me, both in my prosperity and my adversity, I have had great testimonies and pledges, though mine own manifold and wretched unthankfulness might have averted them) will dispose your princely heart, already prepared to all piety. And why should I not think, but that thrice noble prince, who would have pulled me out of the fire of a sentence, will help to pull me (if I may use that homely phrase) out of the mire of an abject and sordid condition in my last days? and that excellent favourite of yours (the goodness of whose nature contendeth with the goodness of his fortune; and who counteth it a prize, a second prize, to be a good friend, after that prize which he carrieth to be a good servant) will kiss your hands with joy for any work of piety you shall do for me. And as all commiserable persons (especially such as find their hearts void of all malice) are apt to think that all men pity them, so I assure myself that the Lords of your Council, who out of their wisdom and nobleness cannot but be sensible of human events, will in this way which I go for the relief of my estate,

further and advance your Majesty's goodness towards me. For there is, as I conceive, a kind of fraternity between great men that are and those that have been, being but the several tenses of one verb. Nay, I do further presume, that both houses of parliament will love their justice the better, if it end not in my ruin. For I have been often told by many of my lords, as it were in the way of excusing the severity of the sentence, that they knew they left me in good hands. And your Majesty knoweth well, I have been all my life long acceptable to those assemblies, not by flattery but by moderation, and by honest expressing of a desire to have things go fairly and well.

But if it may please your Majesty, for saints I shall give them reverence, but no adoration. My address is to your Majesty, the fountain of goodness. Your Majesty shall by the grace of God not feel that in gift, which I shall extremely feel in help. For my desires are moderate, and my courses measured to a life orderly and reserved, hoping still to do you honour in my way. Only I most humbly beseech your Majesty to give me leave to conclude with those words, which Necessity speaketh: Help me (dear sovereign lord and master) and pity me so far, as I that have borne a bag be not now in my age forced in effect to bear a wallet; nor I, that desire to live to study, may not study to live. I most humbly crave pardon of a long letter, after a long silence. God of heaven ever bless, preserve, and prosper your Majesty. Your Majesty's poor ancient servant and beadsman,

Fr. St. Alban.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

1564–1616

Letter 7. William Shakespeare to the Earl of Southampton

The one profound and common regret of students of literature is that we have no private letters of Shakespeare. Two letters of dedication survive. We give that prefixed to *Venus and Adonis*, which was inscribed "to the Right Honourable Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton and Baron of Titchfield".

Right Honourable,—

I know not how I shall offend in dedicating my unpolished lines to your lordship, nor how the world will censure me for choosing so strong a prop to support so weak a burden: only, if your honour seemed but pleased, I account myself highly praised, and vow to take advantage of all idle hours, till I have honoured you with some graver labour. But if the first heir of my invention prove deformed, I shall be sorry it had so noble a godfather, and never after ear so barren a land, for fear it yield me still so bad a harvest. I leave it to your honourable survey, and your honour to your heart's content; which I wish may always answer your own wish and the world's hopeful expectation.

Your honour's in all duty,

William Shakespeare.

JOHN DONNE

1573–1631

Letter 8. John Donne to Sir Henry Goodere

The letters of Dr. Donne, published by his son John in 1654, form what appears to be the first collection of private letters ever issued in England. Donne—courtier, wit, Bencher, and Dean of St. Paul's—was so much admired as poet and man of letters, that even in his own day his lightest writings were valued, and the volume had a good sale. The letters give us "a curious insight into fashions and ways of living, and the tone of feeling among the upper classes of society during the reign of James I" (Jessop), as well as into Donne's private difficulties and questionings.

March, 1615.

Sir,—

I have destined all this Tuesday for the Court, because it is both a Sermon day, and the first day of the King's being here. Before I was to go forth, I had made up the enclosed packet for you, and then came this message with your packet, of which, if you can remember the number, you cannot expect any account thereof from me, who have not half an hour left me before I go forth, and your messenger speaks of a necessity of returning homeward before my returning home. If upon the delivery of them, or any other occasion, there intervene new subject of writing, I shall relieve myself upon Tuesday, if Tamworth carrier be in town. To the particulars of the letter to myself, I will give this paper and line.

Of my Lady Bedford, I must say so much as must importune you to burn the letter; for I would say nothing of her upon record, that should not testify my thankfulness for all her graces. But upon this motion, which I made to her by letter, and by Sir Thomas Roe's assistance, if any scruple

should arise in her, she was somewhat more startling than I looked for from her; she had more suspicion of my calling, a better memory of my past life, than I had thought her nobility could have admitted; of all which, though I humbly thank God, I can make good use, as one that needs as many remembrances in that kind, as not only friends but enemies can present, yet I am afraid they proceed in her rather from some ill impression taken from Dr. Burgess, than that they grow in herself. But whosoever be the conduit, the water is the Holy Ghost's, and in that acception I take it. For her other way of expressing her favour to me, I must say, it is not with that cheerfulness as heretofore she hath delivered herself towards me. I am almost sorry that an elegy should have been able to move her to so much compassion heretofore, as to offer to pay my debts; and my greater wants now, and for so good a purpose, as to come disengaged into that profession, being plainly laid open to her, should work no farther but that she sent me £30, which in good faith she excused with that, which is in both parts true, that her present debts were burdensome, and that I could not doubt of her inclination, upon all future emergent occasions, to assist me. I confess to you, her former fashion towards me had given a better confidence; and this diminution in her makes me see, that I must use more friends than I thought I should have needed.

I would you could burn this letter before you read it; at least do when you have read it. For, I am afraid out of a contemplation of mine own unworthiness, and fortune, that the example of this Lady should work upon the Lady where you are;

for though goodness be originally in her, and she do good for the deed's sake, yet, perchance, she may think it a little wisdom to make such measure of me, as they who know no better do.

Of any new treaty of a match with Spain, I hear nothing. The wars in the Low Countries, to judge by their present state, are very likely to go forward. No word of a Parliament, and I myself have heard words of the King as directly against any such purpose, as any can sound. I never heard word, till in your letter, of any stirs in Scotland, for that of the French King which you ask, it hath this good ground, that in the Assembly there is a proposition hath been made, and well entertained, that the King should be declared to have full jurisdiction in France; and no other person to have any. It hath much of the model and frame of our Oath of Allegiance, but with some modification. It is true, it goes farther than that State hath drove in any public declarations, but not further than their schools have drove often and constantly; the easiness that it hath found in passing thus far without opposition, puts (perchance unnecessarily) in me a doubt, that they are sure to choke it, at the Royal assent, and therefore oppose it not, by the way, to sweeten the conveyance of their other purposes. Sir, if I stay longer I shall lose the text, at Court, therefore I kiss your hand, and rest,

Your very true servant,

J. DONNE.

We hear (but without second as yet) that Sir Richard Philip's brother in France hath taken the habit of a Capuchin.

Letter 9. John Donne to Sir Robert Carr

Donne's most remarkable work was what Walton styles "an exact and laborious treatise concerning self-murder, called *Biathanatos*". Donne set himself to prove that "Self-homicide" was "not so naturally sin that it may never be otherwise". Written between the years 1606 and 1608, the work was shown to very few even of Donne's intimates. When he was going to Germany in 1619 he sent out two copies written in his own hand; one to Sir Edward Herbert (Lord Herbert of Cherbury), who later presented it to the Bodleian, and the other to Sir Robert Ker (or Carr). Unfortunately there was a third copy. This fell into the hands of his eldest son John, who was callous enough to ignore his father's wishes and publish it. As the publication took place in 1644, he may have urged the excuse that Lord Herbert had presented his copy to the Bodleian two years earlier.

April, 1619.

Sir,—

I had need to do somewhat towards you above my promises; how weak are my performances when even my promises are defective? I cannot promise, no, not in mine own hopes, equally to your merit towards me. But besides the poems, of which you took a promise, I send you another book to which there belongs this history: It was written by me many years since; and because it is upon a misinterpretable subject, I have always gone so near suppressing it as that it is only not burnt. No hand hath passed upon it to copy it, nor many eyes to read it; only to some particular friends in both universities then when I writ it I did communicate it: and I remember I had their answer, that certainly there was a false thread in it, but not easily found. Keep it, I pray, with the same jealousy. Let any that your discretion admits to the sight of it know the date of it, and that it is a book written by Jack Donne, and not by Dr.

Donne. Preserve it for me if I live, and if I die I only forbid it the press and the fire. Publish it not, but yet burn it not; and between those do what you will with it. Love me still thus far for your own sake, that when you withdraw your love from me you will find so many unworthinesses in me as you grow ashamed of having had so long, and so much, such a thing as—Your poor servant in Christ Jesus,

J. Donne.

BEN JONSON

1573–1637

Letter 10. Ben Jonson to William Drummond

Rare Ben was a pioneer of walking tours, and took a famous tramp of some months in Scotland. Setting out on foot from London in June, 1618, he toured the Lowlands until the winter set in, going as far west as Loch Lomond and east to St. Andrews. In December he visited Drummond at Hawthornden, gossiping there in his large way about his predecessors and contemporaries in poetry. On the whole, they were an indifferent lot, in Ben's opinion. (Happily Drummond jotted down notes of the talks, and these notes have been discovered.) Spenser "pleased him not" in stanza or matter; Shakespeare "wanted art and sometimes sense". It is clear that Drummond, though interested, was not appreciative. Jonson, bricklayer, soldier, poet; loud, blustering, and fond of the bowl, was not, for all his bigheartedness and sterling nature, the sort of man to attract the retiring and sensitive bard of Hawthornden. All the same, they maintained a correspondence for some seven months after Jonson sailed home from Leith.

London, *May* 10, 1619.

Most loving and beloved sir, against which titles I should most knowingly offend, if I made you not at length some account of myself, to come even

with your friendship. I am arrived safely, with a most catholic welcome, and my reports not unacceptable to his Majesty. He professed (I thank God) some joy to see me, and is pleased to hear of the purpose of my book, to which I most earnestly solicit you for your promise of the inscriptions at Pinky, some things concerning the Loch of Lomond, touching the Government of Edinburgh, to urge Mr. James Scot, and what else you can procure for me with all speed (especially I make it my request that you will enquire for me whether the Students' method at St. Andrews be the same with that at Edinburgh, and so to assure me, or wherein they differ). Though these requests be full of trouble, I hope they shall neither burden nor weary such a friendship, whose commands to me, I will even interpret a pleasure. News we have none here, but what is making against the Queen's funeral, whereof I have somewhat in hand which shall look upon you with the next. Salute the beloved Fentons, the Nisbets, the Scots, the Levingstons, and all the honest and honoured names with you, especially Mr. James Writh, his wife, your sister, &c. And if you forget yourself, you believe not in

Your most true friend and lover,

Ben Jonson.

Letter 11. Ben Jonson to John Donne

Lucy, Countess of Bedford, held a brilliant literary Court at Twickenham, where men like Jonson and Donne found ready welcome and an intellectual feast. She was the generous patron of both, and merited the contemporary title given her of "The Friend of the Muses". Donne had evidently written

to Jonson dissuading him from justifying himself against some evil report; and, though no names are mentioned, it is probable that the reference is to a period during which the Countess was ill-disposed towards Jonson, owing to some jealous talebearing by the poet Daniel.

SIR,—

You cannot but believe how dear and reverend your friendship is to me (though all testimony on my part hath been too short to express me) and therefore would I meet it with all obedience. My mind is not yet so deafened by injuries, but it hath an ear for counsel. Yet in this point that you presently dissuade, I wonder how I am misunderstood; or that you should call that an imaginary right, which is the proper justice that every clear man owes to his innocency. Exasperations I intend none, for truth cannot be sharp but to ill natures, or such weak ones whom the ill spirits suspicion, or credulity still possess. My lady may believe whisperings, receive tales, suspect and condemn my honesty, and I may not answer, on the pain of losing her! as if she, who had this prejudice of me were not already lost!—O no, she will do me no hurt, she will think and speak well of my faculties.—She cannot there judge me; or if she could, I would exchange all glory (if I had all men's abilities) which could come that way, for honest simplicity.—But there is a great penalty threatened, the loss of you, my true friend; for others I reckon not, who were never had. You have so subscribed yourself. Alas! how easy is a man accused that is forsaken of defence!—Well, my modesty shall sit down, and (let the world call it guilt or what it will) I will yet thank you that counsel me to a silence in these oppressures, when

confidence in my right, and friends may abandon me. And lest yourself may undergo some hazard, for my questioned reputation, and draw jealousies or hatred upon you, I desire to be left to mine own innocence, which shall acquit me, or heaven shall be guilty.

Your ever true lover,

BEN JONSON.

ROBERT HERRICK

1591–1674

LETTER 12. ROBERT HERRICK TO SIR WILLIAM HERRICK

Herrick was all his life fond of good company. His father, a goldsmith in London, sent him to Cambridge, and carefully preserved his letters. These are generally requests for money, "the still-sweet-singing nightingale", as he afterwards acclaimed it. In London he was one of the associates of Ben Jonson at the Mermaid, before Charles I gave him the living of Dean Prior in Devonshire.

CAMBRIDGE, *January*, 1616.

Before you unsealed my letter, right Worshipful, it cannot be doubted but you had perfect knowledge of the essence of my writing, before you read it: for custom hath made you expect in my plain-song, *mitte pecuniam*, that being the cause *sine qua non*, or the power that gives life and being to each matter. I delight not to draw your imagination to inextricable perplexities, or knit up my love in indissoluble knots, but make no other exposition but the literal sense, which is to entreat you to pay to Mr. Adrian Morice the sum of ten pounds as customarily, and to take a note of his hand for the receipt, which I desire may be effected briefly,

because the circumstance of the time must be expressed. I perceive I must cry with the afflicted *usquequo*, *usquequo*, *Domine*. Yet I have confidence that I live in your memory, howsoever time brings not the thing hoped for to its just maturity; but my belief is strong, and I do establish my hopes on rocks, and fear no quicksands; be you my firm assistant, and good effects, produced from virtuous causes will follow. So shall my wishes pace with yours for the supplement of your own happiness, and the perfection of your own posterity.

Ever to be commanded,

ROBERT HERRICK.

To pay to Mr. Blunt, bookseller in Paul's Churchyard, the sum above-named.

SIR JOHN SUCKLING

1609–1642

LETTER 13. SIR JOHN SUCKLING TO AN UNKNOWN CORRESPONDENT

Suckling, the heir of a splendid fortune, was fond of soldiering. He served with an English legion in Germany under Gustavus Adolphus. Returning to England in 1632, he became a distinguished wit at the Court of Charles I. When, in 1639, Charles marched against the Scots, Suckling joined him with a hundred horsemen raised at his own expense. This letter was written from Berwick shortly before the King's humiliating retreat. Suckling's tragic death in Paris followed soon after.

June, 1639.

SIR,—

We are at length arrived at that river, about the uneven running of which, my friend

Mr. William Shakespeare makes Henry Hotspur quarrel so highly with his fellow-rebels; and for his sake I have been something curious to consider the scantlet of ground that angry monsieur would have had in, but cannot find it could deserve his choler, nor any of the other side ours, did not the King think it did. The account I shall now give you of the war will be but imperfect, since I conceive it to be in the state that part of the four and twenty hours is in, which we can neither call night nor day. I should judge it dawning towards earnest, did not the Lords Covenanters' letters to our Lords here something divide me. So, (sir) you may now imagine us walking up and down the banks of Tweed like the Tower lions in their cages, leaving the people to think what we would do if we were let loose. The enemy is not yet much visible. (It may be it is the fault of the climate, which brings men as slowly forwards as plants:) but it gives us fears that the men of peace will draw all this to a dumb show, and so destroy a handsome opportunity which was now offered, of producing glorious matter for future chronicle.

These are but conjectures, sir: the last part of my letter I reserve for a great and known truth, which is, that I am (sir) your most humble servant,

J. S.

EDMUND WALLER

1606–1687

Letter 14. Edmund Waller to Lady Lucy Sidney.

About the end of 1635, Waller began to pay his addresses to Lady Dorothy Sidney (daughter of the Earl of Leicester), immortalized in his verse as Sacharissa. Aubrey tells us Waller was passionately in love; but that is not borne out by his verses. Waller was vain and shallow. Apparently the lady refused to take him seriously: on July 20, 1639, she was married at Penshurst to Lord Spencer, afterwards Earl of Sunderland. Later in life Sacharissa is said to have met Waller and to have asked him when he would again write verses in her praise. "When you are as young, madame, and as handsome as you were then," was the uncourtly reply.

July, 1639.

Madam,—

In this common joy at Penshurst, I know none to whom complaints may come less unseasonably than to your ladyship, the loss of a bedfellow being almost equal to the loss of a mistress, and therefore you ought, at least to pardon, if you consent not to the imprecations of the deserted, which just heaven no doubt will hear. May my Lady Dorothy, if we may yet call her so, suffer as much, and have the like passion for this young lord, whom she has preferred to the rest of mankind, as others have had for her; and may his love, before the year go about, make her taste of the first curse imposed upon womankind, the pain of becoming a mother. May her first-born be none of her own sex, nor so like her, but that he may resemble her Lord as much as herself. May she, that always affected silence and retired-

ness, have the house filled with the noise and number of her children, and hereafter of her grandchildren, and then may she arrive at that great curse, so much declined by fair ladies, old age; may she live to be very old, and yet seem young, be told so by her glass, and have no aches to inform her of the truth; and when she shall appear to be mortal, may her Lord not mourn for her, but go hand in hand with her to that place, where we are told there is neither marrying, nor giving in marriage, so that being there divorced, we may all have an equal interest in her again! My revenge being immortal, I wish all this may also befall their posterity to the world's end, and afterwards.

To you, madam, I wish all good things, and that this loss may in good time be happily supplied. Madam, I humbly kiss your hand, and beg pardon for this trouble, from

Your Ladyship's most humble servant,

E. Waller.

SIR THOMAS BROWNE

1605–1682

Letter 15. Sir Thomas Browne to Lieutenant Thomas Browne

Sir Thomas Browne was endowed with "an insatiable curiosity to know all things knowable and unknowable". His correspondence is full of interrogations. Of his two sons, the elder, Edward, travelled in Europe and became a distinguished physician. Thomas, the younger, a promising naval officer, who appears to have died early, sent home from his voyages accounts of curiosities likely to please his

insatiable parent. Sir Thomas shows himself pleased with the reports of his son's valour and wisdom which reach him. In this letter he argues elaborately to dissuade the young lieutenant from blowing up himself and his ship, when overpowered by the enemy.

[About *February*, 1667.]

I received yours, and would not defer to send unto you before you sailed, which I hope will come unto you; for in this wind, neither can Rear-admiral Kempthorne come to you, nor you begin your voyage. I am glad you like Lucan so well. I wish more military men could read him; in this passage you mention, there are noble strains; and such as may well affect generous minds. But I hope you are more taken with the verses than the subject, and rather embrace the expression than the example. And this I rather hint unto you, because the like, though in another way, is sometimes practised in the King's ships, when in desperate cases they blow up the same. For though I know you are sober and considerative, yet knowing you also to be of great resolution; and having also heard from ocular testimonies with what undaunted and persevering courage you have demeaned yourself in great difficulties; and knowing your captain to be a stout and resolute man; and with all the cordial friendship that is between you; I cannot omit my earnest prayers unto God to deliver you from such a temptation. He that goes to war must patiently submit unto the various accidents thereof. To be made prisoner by an unequal and overruling power, after a due resistance, is no disparagement; but upon a careless surprisal or faint opposition; and you have so good a memory that you cannot forget many

examples thereof, even of the worthiest commanders in your beloved Plutark. God hath given you a stout, but a generous and merciful heart withal; and in all your life you could never behold any person in misery but with compassion and relief; which had been notable in you from a child: so have you laid up a good foundation for God's mercy; and, if such a disaster should happen, He will, without doubt, mercifully remember you. However, let God that brought you in the world in his own good time, lead you through it; and in his own season bring you out of it; and without such ways as are displeasing unto him. When you are at Cales, see if you can get a box of the Jesuits' powder at easier rate, and bring it in the bark, not in powder. I am glad you have received the bill of exchange for Cales; if you should find occasion to make use thereof. Enquire farther at Tangier of the mineral water you told me, which was near the town, and whereof many made use. Take notice of such plants as you meet with, either upon the Spanish or African coast; and if you know them not, put some leaves into a book, though carelessly, and not with that neatness as in your book at Norwich. Enquire after anyone who hath been at Fez; and learn what you can of the present state of that place, which hath been so famous in the description of Leo and others. The merciful providence of God go with you. *Impellant animæ lintea Thraciæ.*

Your loving father,

THOMAS BROWNE.

For Mr. Thomas Browne, Lieutenant of his

Majesty's ship, the *Marie Rose*, riding in Plymouth Sound.

IZAAK WALTON

1593–1683

Letter 16. Izaak Walton to John Aubrey

Izaak Walton has left for us in his life of Donne one of the most charming biographies in literature. During his residence in Cornhill and Fleet Street he had the opportunity of meeting distinguished literary men. In this letter he answers some enquiries about Ben Jonson.

December 2, 1680.

For your Friends' quæ. this:—

I only knew Ben Jonson, but my Lord of Winton knew him very well, and says he was in the 6th, that is the uppermost form in Westminster School, at which time his father died, and his mother married a bricklayer, who made him (much against his will) to help him in his trade. But in a short time his schoolmaster, Mr. Camden, got him in better employment, which was to attend or accompany a son of Sir Walter Raleigh in his travels. Within a short time after their return, they parted (I think not in cold blood) and with a love suitable to what they had in their travels (not to be commended); and then Ben began to set up for himself in the trade by which he got his subsistence and fame, of which I need not give any account. He got in time to have a £100 a year from the King, also a pension from the city, and the like from many of the nobility, and some of the gentry, which was well paid for love or fear of his railing in verse or prose or both.

My Lord of Winton told me, he told him he was

(in his long retirement and sickness, when he saw him, which was often) much afflicted that he had profaned the Scripture in his plays, and lamented it with horror; yet at that time of his long retirement, his pensions (so much as came in) were given to a woman that governed him, with whom he lived and died near the Abbey at Westminster; and that neither he nor she took much care for next week, and would be sure not to want wine, of which he usually took too much before he went to bed, if not oftener and sooner. My Lord tells me, he knows not, but thinks he was born in Westminster. The question may be put to Mr. Wood very easily upon what grounds he is positive as to his being born there? he is a friendly man and will resolve it. So much for brave Ben. . . .

This is all I know or can learn for your friend, which I wish may be worth the time and trouble of reading it.

I. W.

JOHN MILTON

1608–1674

Letter 17. John Milton to John Bradshaw

Milton's eyesight began to fail about the time that he was appointed Latin Secretary to the Council of State (1649); and by the end of 1652 he was completely blind. This led him to ask for the appointment of his friend Andrew Marvel to be his assistant and to share his salary. Even in a short letter of this kind, Milton shows his fondness for the long sentence "propped on epithets and festooned with digressions".

February 21, 1653.

My Lord,—

But that it would be an interruption to the public, wherein your studies are perpetually

employed, I should now and then venture to supply thus my enforced absence with a line or two, though it were only of business, and that would be no slight one, to make my due acknowledgments of your many favours; which I both do at this time, and ever shall: and have this farther, which I thought my part to let you know of, that there will be with you to-morrow, upon some occasion of business, a gentleman whose name is Mr. Marvile; a man whom, both by report, and the converse I have had with him, of singular desert for the State to make use of; who also offers himself, if there be any employment for him. His father was the Minister of Hull; and he hath spent four years already in Holland, France, Italy, and Spain, to very good purpose, as I believe, and the gaining of those four languages; besides, he is a scholar, and well read in the Latin and Greek authors; and no doubt of an approved conversation, for he comes now lately out of the house of the Lord Fairfax, who was a General, where he was intrusted to give some instructions in the languages to the Lady, his daughter. If upon the death of Mr. Weckerlyn, the Council shall think that I shall need any assistance in the performance of my place (though for my part I find no encumbrances of that which belongs to me, except it be in point of attendance at Conference with Ambassadors, which I must confess in my condition I am not fit for), it would be hard for them to find a man so fit every way for that purpose as this gentleman; one who, I believe, in a short time, would be able to do them as much service as Mr. Ascan. This, my lord, I write sincerely, without any other end than to perform my duty to the public, and

helping them to an humble servant: laying aside those jealousies, and that emulation, which mine own condition must suggest to me, by bringing in such a coadjutor; and remain, my lord,

Your most obliged and faithful servant,

JOHN MILTON.

LETTER 18. JOHN MILTON TO LEONARD PHILARAS, THE ATHENIAN.

This intensely interesting and pathetic letter was written in Latin. It was translated, with others of the *Epistolæ Familiares*, by Fellowes of Oxford, whose version is here given.

WESTMINSTER, *September* 26, 1654.

I have been always devotedly attached to the literature of Greece, and particularly to that of your Athens; and have never ceased to cherish the persuasion that that city would one day make me ample recompense for the warmth of my regard. The ancient genius of your renowned country has favoured the completion of my prophecy in presenting me with your friendship and esteem. Though I was known to you only by my writings, and we were removed to such a distance from each other, you most courteously addressed me by letter; and when you unexpectedly came to London, and saw me who could no longer see, my affliction, which causes none to regard me with greater admiration, and perhaps many even with feelings of contempt, excited your tenderest sympathy and concern. You would not suffer me to abandon the hope of recovering my sight; and informed me you had an intimate friend at Paris,

Dr. Thevenot, who was particularly celebrated in disorders of the eyes, whom you would consult about mine, if I would enable you to lay before him the causes and symptoms of the complaint. I will do what you desire, lest I should seem to reject that aid which perhaps may be offered me by Heaven. It is now, I think, about ten years since I perceived my vision to grow weak and dull; and at the same time I was troubled with pain in my kidneys and bowels, accompanied with flatulency. In the morning, if I began to read, as was my custom, my eyes instantly ached intensely, but were refreshed after a little corporeal exercise. The candle which I looked at, seemed as it were encircled with a rainbow. Not long after the sight in the left part of the left eye (which I lost some years before the other) became quite obscured; and prevented me from discerning any object on that side. The sight in my other eye has now been gradually and sensibly vanishing away for about three years; some months before it had entirely perished, though I stood motionless, everything which I looked at seemed in motion to and fro. A stiff cloudy vapour seemed to have settled on my forehead and temples, which usually occasions a sort of somnolent pressure upon my eyes, and particularly from dinner till the evening. So that I often recollect what is said of the poet Phineus in the Argonautics:—

> A stupor deep his cloudy temples bound,
> And when he walked he seemed as whirling round,
> Or in a feeble trance he speechless lay.

I ought not to omit that while I had any sight left, as soon as I lay down on my bed and turned

on either side, a flood of light used to gush from my closed eyelids. Then, as my sight became daily more impaired, the colours became more faint, and were emitted with a certain inward crackling sound; but at present, every species of illumination being, as it were, extinguished, there is diffused around me nothing but darkness, or darkness mingled and streaked with an ashy brown. Yet the darkness in which I am perpetually immersed, seems always, both night and day to approach nearer to white than black; and when the eye is rolling in its socket, it admits a little particle of light, as through a chink. And though your physician may kindle a small ray of hope, yet I make up my mind to the malady as quite incurable; and I often reflect, that as the wise man admonishes, days of darkness are destined to each of us, the darkness which I experience, less oppressive than that of the tomb, is, owing to the singular goodness of the Deity, passed amid the pursuits of literature and the cheering salutations of friendship. But if, as is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God", why may not any one acquiesce in the privation of his sight, when God has so amply furnished his mind and his conscience with eyes? While He so tenderly provides for me, while He so graciously leads me by the hand, and conducts me on the way, I will, since it is His pleasure, rather rejoice than repine at being blind. And, my dear Philaras, whatever may be the event, I wish you adieu with no less courage and composure than if I had the eyes of a lynx.

JOHN EVELYN

1620–1706

Letter 19. John Evelyn to Samuel Pepys

The literary fame of both these men rests upon their diaries. But Evelyn was more than a diarist. A well-to-do member of the Inner Temple, he was a familiar figure at the Court of Charles II. At the express command of the King, Evelyn undertook a history of the Dutch War (1665), in which the inefficient state of the English Navy was exposed. Materials were put at his disposal by State officials. After considerable progress had been made, the work was stopped by the King himself. No doubt it was found that Evelyn's narrative was likely to go too near the truth for the royal credit. The two following letters tell the tale of the ill-fated book. Evelyn put his copy into the hands of his friend Pepys, who, in spite of his promises (Letter 20), did not return it; nor has the MS. ever been traced. Pepys's papers ultimately passed into the possession of Magdalen College, Cambridge, where careful but fruitless search has been made.

April 28, 1682.

Sir,—

Considering how far your laudable zeal still extends to all things that any way concern the actions of this nation at sea, and that you despise not the least things that may possibly be of use, I make no scruple of sending you all my blotted fragments, which yet with no small pains you will find I had collected, in order to a further progress in the History of the Dutch War. I should be perfectly ashamed of the farrago, when I reflect upon the more precious materials you have amassed; but you know where Virgil found gold, and you will consider that these were only minutes and tumultuary hints relating to ampler pieces, infirm and unfit to be put into the building, but prepared to work on. It is not imaginable to those

who have not tried, what labours an historian that would be exact is condemned to; he must read all, good and bad, and remove a world of rubbish before he can lay the foundation. So far I had gone, and it was well for me I went no farther, and better for the reader on many accounts, as I am sure you find by what I have already been so weak as to show you; and yet I cannot forbear. You will find, among the rest, in a little essay, how what I have written in English would show in Latin, ashamed as I was to see the history of that war published in that universal and learned language, and that in just and specious volumes, whilst we only told our tale to ourselves, and suffered the indignities of those who prepossessed the world to our prejudice; and you know how difficult a thing it is to play an after-game, when men's minds are perverted and their judgments prepossessed. Our sloth and silence in this diffusive age, greedy of intelligence and public affairs, is a great fault, and I wonder our politicians that are at the helm take no more care of it, since we see what advantages reputation alone carries with it in Holland, Genoa, Venice, and even our East India Commission; whereas, all wise men know they are neither so rich, wise or powerful, intrinsically, and that it is the credit and estimation the vulgar has of them which renders them considerable. It was on this account I chose the action at Bergen; not that I thought it to be the most glorious or discreet, for in truth I think much otherwise, but for that the exploit was entire, and because I had seen what the Dane had published in Latin much to our dishonour. How close I have kept to my text you will find by collation,

and whether nervous and sound, none can better judge. That I did not proceed need not be told you. The peace was concluded; my patron resigned his staff: his successor was unkind and unjust to me. The Dutch Ambassador complained of my Treatise of Commerce and Navigation, which was intended but for a prolusion, and published by His Majesty's encouragement before the peace was quite ratified, though not publicly till afterwards. In sum, I had no thanks for what I had done, and have been accounted since, I suppose, an useless fop, and fit only to plant coleworts, and I cannot bend to mean submissions; and this, Sir, is the history of the Historian. I confess to you, I had once the vanity to hope, had my patron continued in his station, for some, at least, honorary title that might have animated my progress, as seeing then some amongst them whose talents I did not envy: but it was not my fortune to succeed. If I were a young man, and had the vanity to believe any industry of mine might recommend me to the friendship and esteem of Mr. Pepys, as I take him to be of a more enlarged and generous soul, so I should not doubt but he would promote this ambition of mine, and not think one that would labour for the honour of his country, in my way, unworthy some regard. This almost prompts me to say the same to him that Joseph did to Pharaoh's exauctorated butler, whose restoration to grace he predicted,—*Tantum memento mei cum bene tibi fuerit.* And so farewell,

Dear Sir,

J. E.

SAMUEL PEPYS

1633-1703

Letter 20. Samuel Pepys to John Evelyn

Easter Monday, 1692.

Sir,—

The last being Confession, this in all good conscience should be Restitution Week; and, as far as I am able, the first act of it shall be the acquitting myself honestly towards you, in reference to that vast treasure of papers which I have had of yours so many years in my hands, in hopes of that *otium* I have now for three years been master of, but on conditions easily to be guessed at, which have not allowed me the company of more of my papers than I was content to adventure being visited and disordered: and it is not above three weeks since I have taken the liberty of remanding any of them within my reach. Out of these I have made shift to collect all that relate to the State concernment in the ministry of Sir R. Browne, and those of your own growth towards the History of our Dutch War, 1665, which, with that which followed it in 1672, I wish I could see put together by your hand, as greatly suspecting they will prove the last instances of the sea actions of this nation, which will either bear telling at all, or be worthy of such an historian as Mr. Evelyn. Another piece of restitution I have to make you, is your *Columna Trajani*, which, out of a desire of making the most use of, with the greatest care to my eyes, I put out unfortunately to an unskilful hand, for the washing its prints with some thin stain to abate the too strong lustre of the paper; in the execution whereof

part of it suffered so much injury, that not knowing with what countenance to return it, I determined upon making you amends by the first fair book I could meet with; but with so ill success, that, notwithstanding all my industry, at auctions and otherwise, I have only been able to lay my eye on one, fair or foul, at Scott's, and that wholly wanting the historical part; Sir P. Lely, whose book it was, contenting himself with so much and no more, as touched the profession of a painter without that of a scholar. I have, therefore, thought it more religious to restore so great a jewel as your own book, even with this damage.

S. P.

ABRAHAM COWLEY

1618–1667

Letter 21. Abraham Cowley to John Evelyn

At the Court of Charles II learning was for a time in fashion, and it was the correct thing to take an interest in the Royal Society (founded 1660). Evelyn was earnestly devoted to the aims of the Society, and, as this letter shows, took a deep interest in the Ode which his fellow member Cowley was writing in its praise. In his own lifetime, Cowley's poetic reputation stood high, but afterwards sank so low that Pope could scornfully ask: "Who now reads Cowley?" A pure writer in an impure time, Cowley reveals in his Essays a delightful prose style which joins him, as a graceful, natural writer, to the chain of which Dryden, Addison, and Goldsmith are the golden links.

Chertsey, *May* 13, 1667.

Sir,—

I am ashamed of the rudeness I have committed in deferring so long my humble thanks for your obliging letter, which I received from you

at the beginning of the last month. My laziness in finishing the copy of verses upon the Royal Society, for which I was engaged before by Mr. Sprat's desire, and encouraged since by you, was the cause of this delay, having designed to send it to you enclosed in my letter; but I am told now that the History is almost quite printed, and will be published so soon, that it were impertinent labour to write out that which you will so suddenly see in a better manner, and in the company of better things. I could not comprehend in it many of those excellent hints which you were pleased to give me, nor descend to the praises of particular persons, because those things afford too much matter for one copy of verses, and enough for a poem, or the History itself; some part of which have I seen, and think you will be very well satisfied with it. I took the boldness to show him your letter, and he says he has not omitted any of those heads, though he wants the eloquence in expression. Since I have the honour to receive from you the reply to a book written in praise of a solitary life, I have sent all about the town in vain to get the author, having very much affection for the subject, which is one of the noblest controversies both modern and ancient; and you have dealt so civilly with your adversary as makes him deserve to be looked after. But I could not meet with him, the books being all, it seems, either burnt or bought up. If you please to do me the favour to lend it to me, and send it to my brother's house (that was) in King's Yard, it shall be returned to you within a few days with the humble thanks of your most faithful obedient servant,

A. Cowley.

JOHN LOCKE

1632–1704

Letter 22. John Locke to Dr. John Wynne

Locke's great achievement, the *Essay on the Human Understanding*, was published in 1690, the fruit of eighteen years' labour. Within a period of two years the Essay was made a textbook in Trinity College, Dublin, the Provost, Dr. Ashe, ordering it to be read by the bachelors in the College and strictly examining their progress. Locke's usual residence was at Oxford, where he practised medicine; and Dr. John Wynne, a Fellow of Jesus College, volunteered to prepare an abridgment of the essay for students. This letter shows how readily Locke assented. Wynne's abbreviation was issued in 1696.

Oates, *February* 3, 1694–5.

Sir,—

You cannot think it strange that I should be surprised at the receipt of a letter of so much civility to me from a person I had not the honour to know, and of so great commendation of my book from a place where I thought it little taken notice of; and though the compliments you are pleased to bestow both on me and it are above what belongs to either, yet I cannot but acknowledge myself sensibly obliged by the kind thoughts you are biassed with in favour both of me and my essay. It having been begun by chance, and continued with no other design but a free inquiry into the subject, it would have been great vanity in me to publish it with hopes, that what had been writ for the diversion of my idle hours, should be made serious business of studious men who know how to employ their time. Those who had leisure to throw away in speculations a little out of the road, I guessed might perhaps look into it. If by the

credit and recommendation of those who, like you, have entertained with a favourable opinion, it be read further, and get into the hand of men of letters and study, it is more than I could expect from a Treatise I writ in a plain and popular style, which, having in it nothing of the air of learning, nor so much of the language of the schools, was little suited to the use or relish of those who, as teachers or learners, applied themselves to the mysteries of scholastic knowledge.

But you, I see, are got above fashion and prejudice; and you must give me leave to have no ordinary thoughts of a man, who, by those two great opposers of all new efforts of improvement, will not suffer yourself to be hindered from contriving how to make the way to real knowledge more open and easy to those beginners who have set their faces that way. I should be very glad if anything in my book could be made useful to that purpose. I agree with you, that most of the larger explications may be looked on as incidental to what you design, and so may by one, who would out of my book make a system of the third part in my division of science, be wholly passed by or but lightly touched on; to which let me add that several of those repetitions, which for reasons then I let it go with, may be omitted, and all the parts contracted into that form and bigness you propose.

But with my little health, and less leisure, considering that I have been so long a stranger to systems, and am utterly ignorant what would suit those you design it for, it is not for me to go about it, though what you have said would incline me to believe it might not be wholly lost labour. It is

not for nothing I hope that this thought is fallen into the mind of one who is much abler to execute it; you, I see, are as much master of my notions as I myself, and better able to put them together to the purpose you intend. I say not this to decline giving my assistance, if you, in civility, think I can afford you any.

The *Abstract*, which was published, in French, in the Bibliothèque Universelle of 1688, will neither in its size or design answer the end you purpose; but if the rough draught of it, which I think I have in English somewhere amongst my papers, may be of any use to you, you may command it, or whatever service I can do you in any kind; for I am, with a very particular esteem and respect,

Sir, your most humble Servant.

JOHN DRYDEN

1631–1700

Letter 23. John Dryden to John Dennis

The unique eminence which Dryden enjoyed during his lifetime was largely due to his translations, for which, owing to the decay of classical learning, there was a great demand. In these he secured great success. His theory was that the translator should recreate the work, so that his production would bear the same relation to his readers and to his own day as the original bore to those to whom it was addressed. On this principle he rendered into English Juvenal, Persius, and Virgil. In this letter he discusses the art of translation and other poetical questions with the critic Dennis, who, in spite of the ridicule poured on him by Swift and Pope, was a man of real ability. The letter helps us to realize what English prose, escaping from the bondage of Milton and Thomas

Browne, was beginning to accomplish. Never overweighted, Dryden's prose moves with the swing of ease and strength.

[? *March*, 1693-4.]

My dear Mr Dennis,—

When I read a letter so full of my commendations as your last, I cannot but consider you as the master of a vast treasure, who having more than enough for yourself, are forced to ebb out upon your friends. You have indeed the best right to **give** them, since you have them in propriety; but they are no more mine when I receive them than the light of the moon can be allowed to be her own, who shines but by the reflexion of her brother. Your own poetry is a more powerful example, to prove that the modern writers may enter into comparison with the ancients, than any which Perrault could produce in France: yet neither he, nor you, who are a better critic, can persuade me, that there is any room left for a solid commendation at this time of day, at least for me.

If I undertake the translation of Virgil, the little which I can perform will shew at least, that no man is fit to write after him, in a barbarous modern tongue. Neither will his machines be of any service to a Christian poet. We see how ineffectually they have been tried by Tasso, and by Ariosto. It is using them too dully, if we only make devils of his gods: as if, for example, I would raise a storm, and make use of Æolus, with this only difference of calling him Prince of the air; what invention of mine would there be in this? or who would not see Virgil through me; only the same trick played over again by a

bungling juggler? Boileau has well observed, that it is an easy matter in a Christian poem, for God to bring the Devil to reason. I think I have given a better hint for new machines in my preface to Juvenal; where I have particularly recommended two subjects, one of King Arthur's conquest of the Saxons, and the other of the Black Prince in his conquest of Spain. But the Guardian Angels of Monarchies and Kingdoms are not to be touched by every hand: a man must be deeply conversant in the Platonic philosophy to deal with them; and therefore I may reasonably expect, that no poet of our age will presume to handle those machines, for fear of discovering his own ignorance; or if he should, he might perhaps be ingrateful enough not to own me for his benefactor.

After I have confessed thus much of our modern heroic poetry, I cannot but conclude with Mr. Rymer, that our English comedy is far beyond anything of the ancients: and notwithstanding our irregularities, so is our tragedy. Shakespeare had a genius for it; and we know, in spite of Mr. Rymer, that genius alone is a greater virtue (if I may so call it) than all other qualities put together. You see what success this learned critic has found in the world, after his blaspheming Shakespeare. Almost all the faults which he has discovered are truly there; yet who will read Mr. Rymer, or not read Shakespeare? For my own part, I reverence Mr. Rymer's learning, but I detest his ill-nature and his arrogance. I indeed, and such as I, have reason to be afraid of him, but Shakespeare has not.

There is another part of poetry, in which the

English stand almost upon an equal foot with the ancients; and it is that which we call Pindaric; introduced, but not perfected, by our famous Mr. Cowley: and of this, Sir, you are certainly one of the greatest masters. You have the sublimity of sense as well as sound, and know how far the boldness of a poet may lawfully extend. I could wish you would cultivate this kind of Ode; and reduce it either to the same measures which Pindar used, or give new measures of your own. For, as it is, it looks like a vast tract of land newly discovered: the soil is wonderfully fruitful, but unmanured; overstocked with inhabitants, but almost all savages, without laws, arts, arms, or policy.

I remember, poor Nat. Lee, who was then upon the verge of madness, yet made a sober and a witty answer to a bad poet, who told him: *It was an easy thing to write like a madman: No*, said he, *it is very difficult to write like a madman, but it is a very easy matter to write like a fool.* Otway and he are safe by death from all attacks, but we poor poets militant (to use Mr. Cowley's expression) are at the mercy of wretched scribblers: and when they cannot fasten upon our verses, they fall upon our morals, our principles of state, and religion. For my principles of religion, I will not justify them to you: I know yours are far different. For the same reason, I shall say nothing of my principles of state. I believe you and yours follow the dictates of your reason, as I in mine do those of my conscience. If I thought myself in an error, I would retract it. I am sure that I suffer for them; and Milton makes even the devil say, that no creature is in love with

pain. For my morals betwixt man and man, I am not to be my own judge. I appeal to the world, if I have deceived or defrauded any man; and for my private conversation, they who see me every day can be the best witnesses, whether or no it be blameless and inoffensive. Hitherto I have no reason to complain that men of either party shun my company. I have never been an impudent beggar at the doors of noblemen: my visits have indeed been too rare to be unacceptable; and but just enough to testify my gratitude for their bounty, which I have frequently received, but always unasked, as themselves will witness.

I have written more than I needed to you on this subject; for I dare say you justify me to yourself. As for that which I first intended for the principal subject of this letter, which is my friend's passion and his design of marriage, on better consideration I have changed my mind; for having had the honour to see my dear friend Wycherly's letter to him on that occasion, I find nothing to be added or amended. But as well as I love Mr. Wycherly, I confess I love myself so well, that I will not shew how much I am inferior to him in wit and judgment, by undertaking anything after him. There is Moses and the Prophets in his council. Jupiter and Juno, as the poets tell us, made Tiresias their umpire in a certain merry dispute, which fell out in heaven betwixt them. Tiresias, you know, had been of both sexes, and therefore was a proper judge; our friend Mr. Wycherly is full as competent an arbitrator; he has been a bachelor, and married man, and is now a widower.

Virgil says of Ceneus,

> Nunc vir, nunc fœmina, Ceneus,
> Rursus et in veterem fato revoluta figuram.

Yet I suppose he will not give any large commendations to his middle state: nor, as the sailor said, will be fond after a shipwreck to put to sea again. If my friend will adventure after this, I can but wish him a good wind, as being his, and,

My dear Mr. Dennis,

Your most affectionate and most faithful Servant,

JOHN DRYDEN.

DANIEL DEFOE

1659–1731

LETTER 24. DANIEL DEFOE TO J. DYER

Defoe, who had been educated for the Nonconformist ministry, and had betaken himself to business, found pamphleteering and journalism more profitable than trade. A newspaper, the *Review*, which for some years he edited thrice weekly, continued till 1713. The kind of squabbles in which newspaper men of the day engaged is shown in this letter, where he patches up a truce with a rival brother of the pen.

NEWINGTON, *June* 17, 1710.

MR. DYER,—

I have your letter. I am rather glad to find you put it upon the trial who was the aggressor, than justify a thing which I am sure you cannot approve; and in this I assure you I am far from injuring you, and refer you to the time when long since you had wrote: *I was fled from justice: one Sammon being taken up for printing a*

libel, and I being then on a journey, nor the least charge against me for being concerned in it by anybody but your letter; also many unkind personal reflections on me in your letter, *when I was in Scotland, on the affair of the Union*, and I assure you when my paper had not in the least mentioned you, and those I refer to time and date for the proof of. I mention this only in defence of my last letter, in which I said no more in it than to let you see I did not merit such treatment, and could nevertheless be content to render any service to you, tho' I thought myself hardly used.

But to state the matter fairly between you and I, *a-writing for different interests*, and so possibly coming under an unavoidable necessity of jarring in several cases: I am ready to make a fair truce of honour with you (viz.) that if what either party are doing, or say, that may clash with the party we are for and urge us to speak, it shall be done without naming either's name, and without personal reflections; and thus we may differ still, and yet preserve the Christian and the gentleman.

This, I think, is an offer may satisfy you. I have not been desirous of giving just offence to you, neither would I to any man however I may differ from him; and I see no reason why I should affront a man's person because I do not join with him in principle. I please myself with being the first proposer of so fair a treaty with you, because I believe, as you cannot deny its being very honourable, so it is not less so in coming first from me, who, I believe, could convince you of my having been the first and the most ill-treated—for further proof I refer you to your letters, *at the time I was threatened with by the Envoy of the*

King of Sweden. However, Mr. Dyer, this is a method which may end what is past, and prevent what is future; and if refused, the future part I am sure cannot lie at my door. . . . Wishing you success in all things (*your opinions of Government excepted*),

I am, your humble servant,

DE FOE.

WILLIAM CONGREVE

1670–1729

LETTER 25. WILLIAM CONGREVE TO JOHN DENNIS

Congreve is generally esteemed the most brilliant of the later Stuart dramatists. Ever sparkling with wit, it was natural for him to discuss at length, with the eminent critic of his day, the nature and literary use of wit and humour. In this letter Congreve shows himself alive to a peril which he cannot be said to have escaped—the peril of excessive wit in dialogue obscuring that clear distinction between the characters, which is essential in good comedy.

DEAR SIR,—

You write to me, that you have entertained yourself two or three days with reading several comedies of several authors; and your observation is, that there is more of humour in our English writers than in any of the other comic poets, ancient or modern. You desire to know my opinion, and at the same time my thought of that which is generally called humour in comedy.

I agree with you in an impartial preference of our English writers in that particular. But if I tell you my thoughts of humour, I must at the

same time confess that what I take for true humour has not been so often written even by them as is generally believed, and some who have valued themselves, and have been esteemed by others for that kind of writing, have seldom touched upon it. To make this appear to the world would require a long and laboured discourse, and such as I neither am able nor willing to undertake. But such little remarks as may be contained within the compass of a letter, and such unpremeditated thoughts as may be communicated between friend and friend, without incurring the censure of the world, or setting up for a dictator, you shall have from me, since you have enjoined it.

To define humour, perhaps, were as difficult as to define wit; for, like that, it is of infinite variety. To enumerate the several humours of men, were a work as endless as to sum up their several opinions. And in my mind the *Quot homines tot sententiæ* might have been more properly interpreted of humour; since there are many men of the same opinion in many things, who are yet quite different in humours. But though we cannot certainly tell what wit is, or what humour is, yet we may go near to show something which is not wit, or not humour, and yet often mistaken for both. . . . When a poet brings a character on the stage, committing a thousand absurdities, and talking impertinencies, roaring aloud, and laughing immoderately, on every, or rather upon no occasion; this is a character of humour.

Is anything more common than to have a pretended comedy stuffed with such grotesque figures and farce-fools? Things that either are not in nature, or if they are, are monsters, and births of

mischance; and consequently, as such, should be stifled, and huddled out of the way, like Sooterkins, that mankind may not be shocked with an appearing possibility of the degeneration of a God-like species. For my part, I am as willing to laugh as anybody, and as easily diverted with an object truly ridiculous; but at the same time, I can never care for seeing things that force me to entertain low thoughts of my nature. I don't know how it is with others, but I confess freely to you, I could never look long upon a monkey without very mortifying reflections; though I never heard anything to the contrary why that creature is not originally of a distinct species. As I don't think humour exclusive of wit, neither do I think it inconsistent with folly; but I think the follies should be only such as men's humours may incline them to, and not follies entirely abstracted from both humour and nature.

Sometimes personal defects are misrepresented for humours. I mean, sometimes characters are barbarously exposed on the stage, ridiculing natural deformities, casual defects in the senses, and infirmities of age. Sure the poet must both be very ill-natured himself, and think his audience so, when he proposes, by showing a man deformed, or deaf, or blind, to give them an agreeable entertainment; and hopes to raise their mirth by what is truly an object of compassion. But much need not be said upon this head to anybody, especially to you, who in one of your letters to me concerning Mr. Jonson's *Fox*, have justly excepted against this immoral part of ridicule in Corbaccio's character; and there I must agree with you to blame him, whom otherwise I cannot enough

admire, for his great mastery in true humour in comedy. . . .

The character of Morose in the *Silent Woman*, I take to be a character of humour. And I choose to instance this character to you, from many others of the same author, because I know it has been condemned by many as unnatural and farce; and you have yourself hinted some dislike of it, for the same reason, in a letter to me concerning some of Jonson's plays.

Let us suppose Morose to be a man naturally splenetic and melancholy: is there anything more offensive to one of such a disposition, than noise and clamour? Let any man that has the spleen (and there are enough in England) be judge. We see common examples of this humour in little every day. 'Tis ten to one but three parts in four of the company that you dine with are discomposed and startled at the cutting of a cork, or scratching a plate with a knife. It is a proportion of the same humour, that makes such or any other noise offensive to the person that hears it; for there are others who will not be disturbed at all by it. Well; but Morose, you will say, is so extravagant, he cannot bear any discourse or conversation above a whisper. Why, it is his excess of this humour that makes him become ridiculous, and qualifies his character for comedy. If the poet had given him but a moderate proportion of that humour, 'tis odds but half the audience would have sided with the character, and have condemned the author for exposing a humour which was neither remarkable nor ridiculous. Besides, the distance of the stage requires the figure represented to be something larger than the life; and sure a picture may have

features larger in proportion, and yet be very like the original. If this exactness of quantity were to be observed in wit, as some would have it in humour, what would become of those characters that are designed for men of wit? I believe if a poet should steal a dialogue of any length from the extempore discourse of the two wittiest men upon earth, he would find the scene but coldly received by the town. But to the purpose:

The character of Sir John Daw in the same play is a character of affectation. He everywhere discovers an affectation of learning; when he is not only conscious to himself, but the audience also plainly perceives that he is ignorant. Of this kind are the characters of Thraso in the *Eunuch* of Terence, and Pyrgopolinices in the *Miles Gloriosus* of Plautus: they affect to be thought valiant, when both themselves and the audience know they are not. Now such a boasting of valour in men who were really valiant, would undoubtedly be a humour; for a fiery disposition might naturally throw a man into the same extravagance, which is only affected in the characters I have mentioned.

The character of Cob in *Every Man in his Humour*, and most of the under characters in *Bartholomew Fair*, discover only a singularity of manners, appropriated to the several educations and professions of the persons represented. They are not humours, but habits contracted by custom. Under this head may be ranged all country clowns, sailors, tradesmen, jockeys, gamesters, and such like, who make use of cants or peculiar dialects in their several arts and vocations. One may almost give a receipt for the compositions of such a character; for the poet has nothing to do but to collect

a few proper phrases and terms of art, and to make the person apply them by ridiculous metaphors in his conversation with characters of different natures. Some late characters of this kind have been very successful; but in my mind they may be painted without much art or labour, since they require little more than a good memory and superficial observation. But true humour cannot be shown without a dissection of nature, and a narrow search to discover the first seeds from whence it has its root and growth. . . .

I don't doubt but you have observed several men laugh when they are angry; others who are silent; some that are loud: yet I cannot suppose that it is the passion of anger which is in itself different, or more or less in one than t'other; but that it is the humour of the man that is predominant, and urges him to express it in that manner. Demonstrations of pleasure are as various: one man has a humour of retiring from all company, when anything has happened to please him beyond expectation; he hugs himself alone, and thinks it an addition to the pleasure to keep it secret. Another is upon thorns till he has made proclamation of it; and must make other people sensible of his happiness, before he can be so himself. So it is in grief and other passions. Demonstrations of love, and the effects of that passion upon several humours, are infinitely different: but here the ladies, who abound in servants, are the best judges. Talking of the ladies, methinks something should be observed of the humour of the fair sex, since they are sometimes so kind as to furnish out a character for comedy. But I must confess, I have never made any observation of what I apprehend to be

true humour in women. Perhaps passions are too powerful in that sex to let humour have its course, or maybe, by reason of their natural coldness, humour cannot exert itself to that extravagant degree which it often does in the male sex: for if ever anything does appear comical or ridiculous in a woman, I think it is little more than an acquired folly or an affectation. We may call them the weaker sex; but I think the true reason is, because our follies are stronger, and our faults are more prevailing. . . .

There is infinitely more to be said on this subject, tho' perhaps I have already said too much; but I have said it to a friend, who, I am sure, will not expose it if he does not approve of it. I believe the subject is entirely new, and was never touched upon before; and if I would have anyone to see this private essay, it should be someone who might be provoked by my errors in it to publish a more judicious treatise on the subject. Indeed I wish it were done, that the world being a little acquainted with the scarcity of true humour, and the difficulty of finding and showing it, might look a little more favourably on the labours of them who endeavour to search into nature for it, and lay it open to the public view.

I don't say but that very entertaining and useful characters, and proper for comedy, may be drawn from affectations, and those other qualties which I have endeavoured to distinguish from humour; but I would not have such imposed on the world for humour, nor esteemed of equal value with it. It were perhaps the work of a long life to make one comedy true in all its parts, and to give every

character in it a true and distinct humour. Therefore every poet must be beholden to other helps, to make out his number of ridiculous characters. But I think such a one deserves to be broke who makes all false musters; who does not show one true humour in a comedy, but entertains his audience to the end of the play with everything out of nature.

I will make but one observation to you more, and I have done; and that is grounded upon an observation of your own, and which I mentioned at the beginning of my letter, viz. that there is more of humour in our English comic writers than in any others. I do not at all wonder at it, for I look upon humour to be almost of English growth; at least it does not seem to have found such increase on any other soil; and what appears to me to be the reason of it, is the great freedom, privilege, and liberty which the common people of England enjoy. Any man that has a humour, is under no restraint or fear of giving it vent: they have a proverb among them, which maybe will show the bent and genius of the people as well as a longer discourse: he that will have a May-pole shall have a May-pole. This is a maxim with them, and their practice is agreeable to it. I believe something considerable too may be ascribed to their feeding so much on flesh, and the grossness of their diet in general. But I have done, let the physicians agree that. Thus you have my thoughts of humour to my power of expressing them in so little time and compass. You will be kind to show me wherein I have erred; and as you are very capable of giving me instruction, so I think I have a very just title to

demand it from you; being, without reserve, your real friend and humble servant,

W. CONGREVE.

JONATHAN SWIFT

1667–1745

LETTER 26. JONATHAN SWIFT TO THE EARL OF HALIFAX

The key to Swift's chequered life may be found in his passion for independence. Endowed with great social qualities of head and heart, he allowed this craving by monstrous growth to sap their life, making him hard and overbearing. In this letter Swift is seen doing what he loathed—asking as a favour what he regarded as his right. A promise of preferment for him had been made to his patron, Sir William Temple, by William III. Again and again Swift entertained a hope that the Whig ministry would do something to redeem this promise. At the beginning of 1709 his heart beat high; but all he got from Halifax, the great Whig Mæcenas, was a promise that, with Addison's aid, he would urge Swift's claims.

LEICESTER, *June* 13, 1709.

MY LORD,—

Before I leave this place (where ill health has detained me longer than I intended) I thought it my duty to return your Lordship my acknowledgments for all your favours to me while I was in town; and, at the same time, to beg some share in your Lordship's memory, and the continuance of your protection. You were pleased to promise me your good offices upon occasion; which I humbly challenge in two particulars; one is that you will sometimes put my Lord President in mind of me; the other is, that your Lordship

will duly once every year wish me removed to England. In the meantime, I must take leave to reproach your Lordship for a most inhuman piece of cruelty; for I can call your extreme good usage of me no better, since it has taught me to hate the place where I am banished, and raised my thoughts to an imagination, that I might live to be some way useful or entertaining, if I were permitted to live in Town, or (which is the highest punishment on Papists) anywhere within ten miles round it. You remember very well, my Lord, how another person of quality in Horace's time, used to serve a sort of fellows who had disobliged him; how he sent them fine clothes, and money, which raised their thoughts and their hopes, till those were worn out and spent, and then they were ten times more miserable than before. *Hac ego si compellor imagine, cuncta resigno.* I could cite several other passages from the same author, to my purpose; and whatever is applied to Mæcenas I will not thank your Lordship for accepting, because it is what you have been condemned to these twenty years by every one of us, *qui se mêlent d'avoir de l'esprit.* I have been studying how to be revenged of your Lordship, and have found out the way. They have in Ireland the same idea with us of your Lordship's generosity, magnificence, wit, judgement, and knowledge in the enjoyment of life. But I shall quickly undeceive them, by letting them plainly know that you have neither Interest nor Fortune which you can call your own; both having been long made over to the Corporation of deserving Men in Want, who have appointed you their advocate and steward, which the world is pleased to call Patron and Pro-

tector. I shall inform them, that myself and about a dozen others kept the best table in England, to which because we admitted your Lordship in common with us, made you our manager, and sometimes allowed you to bring a friend, therefore ignorant people would needs take You to be the Owner. And lastly, that you are the most injudicious person alive; because, though you had fifty times more wit than all of us together, you never discover the least value for it, but are perpetually countenancing and encouraging that of others. I could add a great deal more, but shall reserve the rest of my threatenings till further provocation. In the mean time I demand of your Lordship the justice of believing me to be with the greatest respect,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's most obedient and
most obliged humble servant

Jon. Swift.

Pray, my Lord, desire Dr. South to die about the fall of the leaf, for he has a Prebend of Westminster, which will make me your neighbour, and a sinecure in the country, both in the Queen's gift, which my friends have often told me would fit me extremely; and forgive me one word which I know not what extorts from me; that if my Lord President would in such a juncture think me worth laying any weight of his Credit, you cannot but think me persuaded that it would be a very easy matter to compass: and I have some sort of pretence, since the late King promised me a Prebend of Westminster, when I petitioned him in pur-

suance of a recommendation I had from Sir William Temple.

Letter 27. Jonathan Swift to Alexander Pope

Admirers of the fierce but magnetic Dean dwell with satisfaction on his capacity for friendship. True, the circle was restricted—Bolingbroke, the genial and learned Arbuthnot, the rising young wits Pope and Gay—but inside the charmed area the feeling, as the next two letters show, was strong and warm. Visiting England in 1726, Swift brought "Gulliver" with him, and it was published anonymously late in the autumn. Greatly pleased with its immediate and overwhelming success, Swift, ever fond of mystification, was even more delighted with the general bewilderment regarding the author.

Dublin, *November* 17, 1726.

I am just come from answering a letter of Mrs. Howard, writ in such mystical terms that I should never have found out the meaning, if a book had not been sent me called *Gulliver's Travels*, of which you say so much in yours. I read the book over, and in the second volume observed several passages which appear to be patched and altered, and the style of a different sort, unless I am mistaken. Dr. Arbuthnot likes the projectors least; others, you tell me, the flying island; some think it wrong to be so hard upon whole bodies or corporations, yet the general opinion is, that reflections on particular persons are most to be blamed; so that in these cases I think the best method is to let censure and opinion take their course. A bishop here said the book was full of improbable lies, and for his part he hardly believed a word of it; and so much for Gulliver.

Going to England is a very good thing, if it

were not attended with an ugly circumstance of returning to Ireland. It is a shame you do not persuade your ministers to keep me on that side, if it were but by a court expedient of keeping me in prison for a plotter; but at the same time I must tell you that such journeys very much shorten my life, for a month here is very much longer than six at Twickenham.

How comes friend Gay to be so tedious? Another man can publish fifty thousand lies sooner than he can publish fifty tales. . . . Let me add, that if I were Gulliver's friend I would desire all my acquaintance to give out that his copy was basely mangled, and abused, and added to, and blotted out, by the printer; for so to me it seems, in the second volume particularly.

Adieu.

Letter 28. Jonathan Swift to John Gay

Dublin, *May* 4, 1732.

I am as lame as when you writ your letter, and almost as lame as your letter itself, for want of that limb from my Lady Duchess, which you promised, and without which I wonder how it could limp hither. I am not in a condition to make a true step even on Amesbury Downs, and I declare that a corporeal false step is worse than a political one; nay, worse than a thousand political ones, for which I appeal to courts and ministers, who hobble on and prosper, without the sense of feeling. To talk of riding and walking, is insulting me, for I can as soon fly as do either. It is your pride or laziness, more than chair-hire, that makes the town expensive. No honour is lost by walking in the

dark: and in the day you may beckon a blackguard-boy under a gate near your visiting place, (*experto crede,*) save elevenpence, and get half a crown's worth of health. The worst of my present misfortune is, that I eat and drink, and can digest neither for want of exercise; and to increase my misery, the knaves are sure to find me at home, and make huge void spaces in my cellars. I congratulate with you, for losing your great acquaintance; in such a case, philosophy teaches that we must submit, and be content with good ones. I like Lord Cornbury's refusing his pension, but I demur at his being elected for Oxford; which, I conceive, is wholly changed, and entirely devoted to new principles; so it appeared to me the two last times I was there.

I find, by the whole cast of your letter, that you are as giddy and as volatile as ever, just the reverse of Mr. Pope, who hath always loved a domestic life from his youth. I was going to wish you had some little place that you could call your own, but I profess, I do not know you well enough to contrive any one system of life that would please you. You pretend to preach up riding and walking to the Duchess, yet from my knowledge of you, after twenty years, you always joined a violent desire of perpetually shifting places and company, with a rooted laziness, and an utter impatience of fatigue. A coach and six horses is the utmost exercise you can bear, and this only when you can fill it with such company as is best suited to your taste; and how glad would you be if it could waft you in the air to avoid jolting? while I, who am so much later in life, can, or at least could, ride 500 miles on a trotting horse. You mortally hate

writing, only because it is the thing you chiefly ought to do; as well to keep up the vogue you have in the world, as to make you easy in your fortune. You are merciful to everything but money, your best friend, whom you treat with inhumanity. Be assured, I will hire people to watch all your motions, and to return me a faithful account. Tell me, have you cured your absence of mind? can you attend to trifles? Can you at Amesbury write domestic libels to divert the family and neighbouring squires for five miles round? or venture so far on horseback, without apprehending a stumble at every step? Can you set the footmen a-laughing as they wait at dinner? And do the Duchess's women admire your wit? In what esteem are you with the vicar of the parish? Can you play with him at backgammon? Have the farmers found out that you cannot distinguish rye from barley, or an oak from a crab-tree? You are sensible that I know the full extent of your country skill is in fishing for roaches, or gudgeons at the highest.

I love to do you good office with your friends, and therefore desire you will show this letter to the Duchess, to improve her Grace's good opinion of your qualifications, and convince her how useful you are like to be in the family. Her Grace shall have the honour of my correspondence again, when she goes to Amesbury. Hear a piece of Irish news; I buried the famous General Meredyth's father last night in my Cathedral; he was ninety-six years old; so that Mrs. Pope may live seven years longer.

You saw Mr. Pope in health; pray, is he generally more healthy than when I was amongst you? I would know how your own health is, and how

much wine you drink in a day; my stint in company is a pint at noon, and half as much at night; but I often dine at home like a hermit, and then I drink little or none at all. Yet I differ from you, for I would have society, if I could get what I like —people of middle understanding, and middle rank.

Adieu.

LORD BOLINGBROKE

1678–1751

Letter 29. Lord Bolingbroke to the three Yahoos of Twickenham, Jonathan, Alexander, John

Henry St. John, Viscount Bolingbroke, is to-day better known in politics than in literature. He was a man of many contradictions, and has been styled the "Alcibiades of his time". Though sprung from staunch Puritan stock, he entered Parliament in 1700 as a Tory, and was made Secretary for War in 1704. One of the most brilliant figures at the Court of Anne, he distinguished himself as a patron of letters, happy in the friendship of Swift and subsequently of Pope and Gay. At the death of Anne, suspected of Jacobite intrigues, he fled to France, and attached himself for a short time to the Pretender. Permitted to return in 1723, he regained his estates, but not his rights as a peer, and had to abandon open interference in politics. His active spirit found relief in writing and in cultivating his literary friendships. France received him in 1735 for a further stay of seven years, during which were written his *Letters on the Study of History*, and his most finished work, *The Idea of a Patriot King*, in which he paints the picture of a monarch rising superior to parliamentary factions by reliance on the people. Most of his writings were published after his death by his literary executor, David Mallet. Among them were some sceptical letters (several addressed to Pope) on religion and philosophy. These roused the ire of Johnson, who stigmatized Bolingbroke as scoundrel and coward; "A scoundrel for

charging a blunderbuss against religion and morality; a coward, because he had not resolution to fire it off himself". Bolingbroke maintained his literary eminence on a very moderate stock of learning, but, with true rhetorical skill, knew how to suggest to his readers that his lean purse was backed by a full coffer. Though shallow, he is lively and felicitous in expression. If he cannot convince, he can at least make the best of a bad argument. He fascinated Pope; he won Swift's reluctant affection, though not his confidence. How pleasant his relations were with this literary coterie is shown by the following sprightly effusion.

From the banks of the Severn, *July* 23, 1726.

Most Excellent Triumvirs of Parnassus,—

Though you are probably very indifferent where I am, or what I am doing, yet I resolve to believe the contrary. I persuade myself that you have sent at least fifteen times within this fortnight to Dawley farm, and that you are extremely mortified at my long silence. To relieve you therefore from this great anxiety of mind, I can do no less than write a few lines to you; and I please myself beforehand with the vast pleasure which the epistle must needs give you. That I may add to this pleasure, and give you farther proofs of my beneficent temper, I will likewise inform you, that I shall be in your neighbourhood again by the end of next week; by which time I hope that Jonathan's imagination of business will be succeeded by some imagination more becoming a professor of that divine science, *la bagatelle.*

Adieu, Jonathan, Alexander, John! Mirth be with you.

Letter 30. Lord Bolingbroke to Jonathan Swift (with P.S. by Pope)

In a letter to Pope (June 1, 1728) Swift says: "I look upon my lord Bolingbroke and us two as a peculiar triumvirate, who have nothing to expect or to fear, and so far fitted to converse with one another, only he and I are a little subject to schemes". Swift, though he could not acquit Bolingbroke of the charge of affectation and doubted his seriousness, admired his "strong memory, clear judgment, and vast range of wit and fancy". Visiting London in 1726, after an absence of twelve years, Swift would naturally be drawn very close to his old friend.

March 20, 1731.

I have delayed several posts answering your letter of January last, in hopes of being able to speak to you about a project which concerns us both, but me the most, since the success of it would bring us together. It had been a good while in my head, and at my heart; if it can be set a-going, you shall hear of it. I was ill in the beginning of winter for near a week, but in no danger either from the nature of my distemper, or from the attendance of three physicians. Since that bilious intermitting fever, I have had, as I had before, better health than the regard I have paid to health deserves. We are both in the decline of life, my dear Dean, and have been some years going down the hill; let us make the passage as smooth as we can. Let us fence against physical evil by care, and the use of those means which experience must have pointed out to us: let us fence against moral evil by philosophy. I renounce the alternative you propose. But we may, nay, (if we will follow nature, and do not work up imagination against her plainest dictates,) we shall of course grow every year more indifferent

to life, and to the affairs and interests of a system out of which we are soon to go. This is much better than stupidity. The decay of passion strengthens philosophy, for passion may decay, and stupidity not succeed. Passions (says Pope, our divine, as you will see one time or other,) are the gales of life; let us not complain that they do not blow a storm. What hurt does age do us in subduing what we toil to subdue all our lives? It is now six in the morning; I recall the time, (and am glad it is over,) when about this hour I used to be going to bed, surfeited with pleasure, or jaded with business: my head often full of schemes, and my heart as often full of anxiety. Is it a misfortune, think you, that I rise at this hour, refreshed, serene, and calm? that the past, and even the present affairs of life stand like objects at a distance from me, where I can keep off the disagreeable so as not to be strongly affected by them, and from whence I can draw the others nearer to me? Passions in their force would bring all these, nay, even future contingencies, about my ears at once, and reason would but ill defend me in the scuffle. I leave Pope to speak for himself; but I must tell you how much my wife is obliged to you. She says, she would find strength enough to nurse you, if you were here; and yet, God knows, she is extremely weak: the slow fever works under, and mines the constitution; we keep it off sometimes, but still it returns, and makes new breaches before nature can repair the old ones. I am not ashamed to say to you, that I admire her more every hour of my life: Death is not to her the King of Terrors; she beholds him without the least.

When she suffers much, she wishes for him as a deliverer from pain; when life is tolerable, she looks on him with dislike, because he is to separate her from those friends to whom she is more attached than to life itself. You shall not stay for my next as long as you have for this letter; and in every one Pope shall write something much better than the scraps of old philosophers, which were the presents, munuscula, that stoical fop Seneca used to send in every epistle to his friend Lucilius.

P.S.—My lord has spoken justly of his lady; why not I of my mother? Yesterday was her birthday, now entering on the ninety-first year of her age; her memory much diminished, but her senses very little hurt, her sight and hearing good; she sleeps not ill, eats moderately, drinks water, says her prayers; and this is all she does. I have reason to thank God for continuing so long to me a very good and tender parent, and for allowing me to exercise for some years those cares which are now as necessary to her as hers have been to me. An object of this sort daily before one's eyes, very much softens the mind, but perhaps may hinder it from the willingness of contracting other ties of the like domestic nature, when one finds how painful it is even to enjoy the tender pleasures. I have formerly made so strong efforts to get and to deserve a friend: perhaps it were wiser never to attempt it, but live extempore, and look upon the world only as a place to pass through, just pay your hosts their dues, disperse a little charity, and hurry on. Yet am I just now writing (or rather planning) a book to make mankind look upon this life with comfort and pleasure,

and put morality in good humour. And just now, too, I am going to see one I love tenderly, and to-morrow to entertain several civil people, whom, if we call friends, it is by the courtesy of England. *Sic, sic juvat ire sub umbras.* While we do live, we must make the best of life.

Cantantes licet usque (minus via lædet) eamus:

as the shepherd said in Virgil, when the road was long and heavy.

I am yours.

JOHN GAY

1685–1732

Letter 31. Gay and Pope to Swift

Gay was a Devonshire man, and began life in London an orphan, apprenticed to a silk merchant. At the age of twenty-seven he was emancipated from what was (to him) bondage by securing a secretarial post in the household of the Duchess of Monmouth. He won the friendship of Swift, and in 1716 published a work in which he had had the benefit of Swift's guidance—*Trivia*, with its realistic pictures of London streets. The collapse of the South Sea Bubble involved him in losses which reduced him to poverty. He was always thriftless. "He has", wrote Swift to Pope, "as little foresight of age, sickness, poverty, or loss of admirers, as a girl of fifteen." He continued in straits until 1726. In the spring of that year Swift, spending a couple of months with Pope at Twickenham, suggested to Gay, as "an odd pretty sort of thing", a kind of pastoral poem in which thieves and highwaymen should play the leading parts. Gay caught fire and flamed up with the *Beggar's Opera*. First acted in 1727 at Lincoln's Inn Fields, its success, to the surprise even of Swift and Pope, was instantaneous and amazing. It put Italian opera for a time in the background, and prepared the way for native English opera. It ran for sixty-three successive nights. So popular was its music that ladies carried its songs on their fans. Shortly after, Gay accepted the hospitality

of his friends the Duke and Duchess of Queensberry, in whose house he remained till his death. Swift's letters contain some touching references to Gay, whose warm-hearted though selfish simplicity appealed to that secret kindliness which Swift constantly strove to hide. *Gulliver* had been published (Nov. 1726) shortly before the *Beggar's Opera*. Doubtful of the success of the performance, doubtful even of its merits, Swift had admitted few of his friends to the secret. The book was deposited by stealth with a publisher and issued anonymously. It took by storm the literary citadel of London, beating down all criticism. Some echo of the city's bewildered delight is to be heard in the following letter.

November 17, 1726.

About ten days ago a book was published here of the Travels of one Gulliver, which hath been the conversation of the whole town ever since: the whole impression sold in a week; and nothing is more diverting than to hear the different opinions people give of it, though all agree in liking it extremely. It is generally said that you are the author; but I am told, the bookseller declares he knows not from what hand it came. From the highest to the lowest it is universally read, from the cabinet council to the nursery. The politicians to a man agree, that it is free from particular reflections, but that the satire on general societies of men is too severe. Not but we now and then meet with people of greater perspicuity, who are in search of particular applications in every leaf; and it is highly probable we shall have keys published to give light into Gulliver's design. Lord Bolingbroke is the person who least approves it, blaming it as a design of evil consequence to depreciate human nature, at which it cannot be wondered that he takes most offence, being himself the most accomplished of his species, and so losing more than any other of that praise which is due both

to the dignity and virtue of a man. Your friend, my Lord Harcourt, commends it very much, though he thinks in some places the matter too far carried. The Duchess Dowager of Marlborough is in raptures at it; she says she can dream of nothing else since she read it; she declares that she hath now found out, that her whole life hath been lost in caressing the worst part of mankind, and treating the best as her foes; and that if she knew Gulliver, though he had been the worst enemy she ever had, she would give up her present acquaintance for his friendship. You may see by this, that you are not much injured by being supposed the author of this piece. If you are, you have disobliged us, and two or three of your best friends, in not giving us the least hint of it while you were with us; and in particular Dr. Arbuthnot, who says it is ten thousand pities he had not known it, he could have added such abundance of things upon every subject. Among Lady-critics, some have found out that Mr. Gulliver had a particular malice to Maids of Honour. Those of them who frequent the church, say, his design is impious, and that it is depreciating the works of the Creator. Notwithstanding, I am told the Princess hath read it with great pleasure. As to other critics, they think the flying island is the least entertaining; and so great an opinion the town have of the impossibility of Gulliver's writing at all below himself, it is agreed that part was not writ by the same hand, though this hath its defenders too. It hath passed Lords and Commons, *nemine contradicente*; and the whole town, men, women, and children, are quite full of it.

Perhaps I may all this time be talking to you of

a book you have never seen, and which hath not yet reached Ireland; if it hath not, I believe what we have said will be sufficient to recommend it to your reading, and that you will order me to send it to you.

But it will be much better to come over yourself, and read it here, where you will have the pleasure of variety of commentators, to explain the difficult passages to you.

We all rejoice that you have fixed the precise time of your coming to be *cum hirundine prima*; which we modern naturalists pronounce, ought to be reckoned, contrary to Pliny, in this northern latitude of fifty-two degrees, from the end of February, Styl. Greg. at farthest. But to us your friends, the coming of such a black swallow as you, will make a summer in the worst of seasons. We are no less glad at your mention of Twickenham and Dawly; and in town you know you have a lodging at court.

The Princess is clothed in Irish silk; pray give our service to the weavers. We are strangely surprised to hear that the bells in Ireland ring without your money. I hope you do not write the thing that is not. We are afraid that B—— has been guilty of that crime, that you (like Houyhnhnm) have treated him as a yahoo, and discarded him your service. I fear you do not understand these modest terms, which every creature now understands but yourself.

You tell us your wine is bad, and that the clergy do not frequent your house, which we look upon as tautology. The best advice we can give you is to make them a present of your wine, and come away to better.

You fancy we envy you, but you are mistaken; we envy those you are with, for we cannot envy the man we love. Adieu.

ALEXANDER POPE

1688–1744

Letter 32. Alexander Pope to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu

Pope first displayed his literary quality in the *Essay on Criticism*, published anonymously 1711. It was warmly praised by Addison in the *Spectator*, and Steele brought about an introduction of Pope to Addison. In 1712 appeared the first form of *The Rape of the Lock*, enlarged (in defiance of Addison's advice) in 1719. *Windsor Forest* (1713), by its political support of the Tories, brought Pope the friendship of Swift. In 1716 the Pope family moved to Chiswick, where the father died next year. The famous residence at Twickenham was leased in 1719, and soon became the literary centre of Britain. Pope's prose writings, apart from one or two prefaces, consist mainly of a large body of letters, elaborated with great care. His craving for artistic effect in words amounted to a passion. Of everything he wrote his first thought was, How will it look? He, earliest among English literary men, saw the possibility of the letter. He deliberately made it an artistic medium. In so doing he generally made it artificial; and Cowper, the most natural of correspondents, thought Pope utterly disagreeable in his letters. The story of the publication of these in Pope's lifetime and by his own dexterous manipulation, is the story of a mystery whose solution has taxed some of our keenest literary detectives. It is clear that, long before their publication in 1735, he had an eye to their public appearance. Thus in a letter to Swift (Nov. 28, 1729), he writes: "How many occurrences or informations must one omit, if one determined to say nothing that one could not say prettily". Swift replies: "You have been a writer of letters almost from your infancy, and by your own confession had schemes even then of epistolary fame". How constantly on the watch Pope was for

epistolary material within the circle of his everyday experience, is shown by the use he made of his ride with Lintot the bookseller to Oxford, and of the incident of the couple struck by lightning at Stanton-Harcourt—an incident which was embodied with remarkable agreement of phrase in letters to Lady Mary, Martha Blount, Lord Bathurst, Caryll, and Atterbury. The fullest treatment is in the letter to Lady Mary given below. This was, of course, written before their historic quarrel.

[STANTON-HARCOURT] *September* 1, 1718.

MADAM,—

I have been (what I never was till now) in debt to you for a letter some weeks. I was informed you were at sea, and that 'twas to no purpose to write till some news had been heard of your arriving somewhere or other. Besides, I have had a second dangerous illness, from which I was more diligent to be recovered than from the first, having now some hopes of seeing you again. If you make any tour in Italy, I shall not easily forgive you for not acquainting me soon enough to have met you there. I am very certain I can never be polite unless I travel with you: and it is never to be repaired, the loss that Homer had sustained, for want of my translating him in Asia. You will come hither full of criticisms against a man who wanted nothing to be in the right but to have kept you company. You have no way of making me amends, but by continuing an Asiatic when you return to me, whatever English airs you may put on to other people. I prodigiously long for your sonnets, your remarks, your Oriental learning; but I long for nothing so much as your Oriental self. You must of necessity be *advanced* so far *back* into true nature and simplicity of manners, by these three years' residence in the

East, that I shall look upon you as so many years younger than you was, so much nearer innocence (that is, truth), and infancy (that is, openness). I expect to see your soul as much thinner dressed as your body; and that you have left off, as unwieldy and cumbersome, a great many damned European habits. . . .

I have a mind to fill the rest of this paper with an accident that happened just under my eyes, and has made a great impression upon me. I have just passed part of this summer at an old romantic seat of my Lord Harcourt's, which he lent me. It overlooks a common-field, where, under the shade of a haycock, sat two lovers, as constant as ever were found in Romance, beneath a spreading beech. The name of the one (let it sound as it will) was John Hewet; of the other, Sarah Drew. John was a well-set man about five and twenty, Sarah a brown woman of eighteen. John had for several months borne the labour of the day in the same field with Sarah; when she milked, it was his morning and evening charge to bring the cows to her pail. Their love was the talk, but not the scandal, of the whole neighbourhood; for all they aimed at was the blameless possession of each other in marriage. It was but this very morning that he had obtained her parents' consent, and it was but till the next week that they were to wait to be happy. Perhaps this very day, in the intervals of their work, they were talking of their wedding clothes; and John was now matching several kinds of poppies and field-flowers to her complexion, to make her a present of knots for the day. While they were thus employed, (it was on the last of July) a terrible storm of thunder and

lightning arose, that drove the labourers to what shelter the trees or hedges afforded. Sarah, frighted and out of breath, sunk on a haycock, and John (who never separated from her) sate by her side, having raked two or three heaps together to secure her. Immediately there was heard so loud a crack as if Heaven had burst asunder. The labourers, all solicitous for each other's safety, called to one another: those that were nearest our lovers, hearing no answer, stepped to the place where they lay: they first saw a little smoke, and after, this faithful pair—John with one arm about his Sarah's neck, and the other held over her face, as if to screen her from the lightning. They were struck dead, and already grown stiff and cold in this tender posture. There was no mark or discolouring on their bodies, only that Sarah's eyebrow was a little singed, and a small spot between her breasts. They were buried the next day in one grave, in the parish of Stanton-Harcourt in Oxfordshire; where my Lord Harcourt, at my request, has erected a monument over them. Of the following epitaphs which I made, the critics have chosen the godly one: I like neither, but wish you had been in England to have done this office better: I think 'twas what you could not have refused me on so moving an occasion.

When Eastern lovers feed the funeral fire,
On the same pile their faithful fair expire;
Here pitying Heav'n that virtue mutual found,
And blasted both, that it might neither wound.
Hearts so sincere th' Almighty saw well pleas'd,
Sent his own lightning, and the victims seiz'd.

Think not, by rigorous judgment seiz'd,
A pair so faithful could expire;

Victims so pure Heav'n saw well pleas'd
And snatch'd them in celestial fire.

Live well, and fear no sudden fate;
When God calls Virtue to the grave,
Alike 'tis justice, soon or late.
Mercy alike to kill or save.
Virtue unmov'd can hear the call,
And face the flash that melts the ball.

Upon the whole, I cannot think these people unhappy. The greatest happiness, next to living as they would have done, was to die as they did. The greatest honour people of this low degree could have, was to be remembered on a little monument; unless you will give them another,—that of being honoured with a tear from the finest eyes in the world. I know you have tenderness; you must have it; it is the very emanation of good sense and virtue; the finest minds, like the finest metals, dissolve the easiest.

But when you are reflecting upon objects of pity, pray do not forget one, who had no sooner found out an object of the highest esteem, than he was separated from it; and who is so very unhappy as not to be susceptible of consolation from others, by being so miserably in the right as to think other women what they really are. Such an one cannot but be desperately fond of any creature that is quite different from these. If the Circassian be utterly void of such honour as these have, and such virtue as these boast of, I am content. I have detested the sound of *honest woman* and *loving spouse*, ever since I heard the pretty name of Odaliche. Dear Madam, I am for ever your, &c.

Letter 33. Alexander Pope to Jonathan Swift

Travels into Several Remote Nations by Lemuel Gulliver was issued in November, 1726. The *Dunciad* (Bks. 1–3) appeared in May, 1728. In the progress of the epic of "Dulness" Swift took the keenest interest; and Pope went so far as to write to him (Nov. 12, 1728): "Without you the poem had never been". The first complete edition (April, 1729) was dedicated to Swift. There seems no reason, however, to doubt that the idea was Pope's, who got some suggestions from Dryden's *MacFlecknoe*. In Pope's letters to Bolingbroke and Swift the poem is referred to as "Dulness" or the "Progress of Dulness". Swift was always generous in his admiration of his friends' work. "*The Beggar's Opera*", he writes, "has knocked down *Gulliver*: I hope to see Pope's *Dulness* knock down *The Beggar's Opera*, but not till it has fully done its job." In the letter below Pope shows himself well aware of the concern Swift felt for Gay's finances. Swift would not allow Gay to be content with any thousand pounds. He wished him to keep writing till he had £7000, "which will bring you £300 per annum, and this will maintain you, and when you are old will afford you a pint of port, two servants, and an old maid".

March 23, 1728.

I send you a very odd thing, a paper printed in Boston in New England, wherein you'll find a real person, a member of their parliament, of the name of Jonathan Gulliver. If the fame of that traveller has travelled thither, it has travelled very quick, to have folks christened already by the name of the supposed author. But if you object that no child so lately christened could be arrived at years of maturity to be elected into parliament, I reply, to solve the riddle, that the person is an Anabaptist, and not christened till full age, which sets all right. However it be, the accident is very singular, that these two names should be united.

Mr. Gay's opera has been acted near forty days running, and will certainly continue the whole

season. So he has more than a fence about his thousand pounds; he'll soon be thinking of a fence about his two thousand. Shall no one of us live, as we would wish each other to live? Shall we have no annuity: you no settlement on this side, and I no prospect of getting to you on the other? This world is made for Cæsar, as Cato said, for ambitious, false, or flattering people to domineer in; nay, they would not, by their good will, leave us our very books, thoughts, or words in quiet. I despise the world yet, I assure you, more than either Gay or you, and the court more than all the rest of the world. As for those scribblers from whom you apprehend I would suppress my Dulness (which, by the way, for the future, you are to call by a more pompous name, *The Dunciad*), how much that nest of hornets are my regard, will easily appear to you when you read the *Treatise of the Bathos*.

At all adventures, yours and my name shall stand linked as friends to posterity, both in verse and prose: and, as Tully calls it, *in consuetudine studiorum*. Would to God, our persons could but as well, and as surely be inseparable! I find my other ties dropping from me; some worn off, some torn off, some relaxing daily. My greatest, both by duty, gratitude, and humanity, Time is shaking every moment, and it now hangs but by a thread. I am many years the older for living so much with one so old; much the more helpless, for having been so long helped and tended by her; much the more considerate and tender, for a daily commerce with one who required me justly to be both to her; and consequently the more melancholy and thoughtful, and the less fit for others, who want only, in a

companion or a friend, to be amused or entertained. My constitution, too, has had its share of decay, as well as my spirits; and I am as much in the decline at forty, as you at sixty. I believe we should be fit to live together, could I get a little more health, which might make me not quite insupportable. Your deafness would agree with my dulness; you would not want me to speak, when you could not hear. But God forbid you should be as destitute of the social comforts of life, as I must, when I lose my mother; or that ever you should lose your more useful acquaintance so utterly, as to turn your thoughts to such a broken reed as I am, who could so ill supply your wants. I am extremely troubled at the return of your deafness. You cannot be too particular in the accounts of your health to me; everything you do or say in this kind, obliges me, nay, delights me, to see the justice you do me, in thinking me concerned in all your concerns; so that, though the pleasantest thing you can tell me be that you are better or easier, next to that it pleases me that you make me the person you would complain to.

As the obtaining the love of valuable men is the happiest end I know of this life, so the next felicity is to get rid of fools and scoundrels; which I can't but own to you was one part of my design in falling upon these Authors, whose incapacity is not greater than their insincerity, and of whom I have always found (if I may quote myself),

That each bad author is as bad a friend.

This poem will rid me of these insects—

Cedite, Romani Scriptores, cedite, Graii;
Nescio *quid majus nascitur Iliade.*

I mean than *my Iliad*; and I call it *Nescio quid*, which is a degree of modesty; but however, if it silence those fellows, it must be something greater than any *Iliad* in Christendom. Adieu.

Letter 34. Alexander Pope to Martha Blount

"Pope did not love good women, as a man of genius ought", says Leslie Stephen. Women have, as a rule, returned the dislike Pope allowed to peep out in such poems as *The Rape of the Lock*. One pair of female correspondents he had, however, whose letters show genuine affection—the sisters Teresa and Martha Blount. Martha, the younger, was born in 1690; her sister two years earlier. Pope began the correspondence in 1712; and in 1718 they came to live in his neighbourhood. To these sisters Pope writes with an easy animation, differing entirely from the affected and even insolent artifice that marks his letters to Lady Mary. His regard for Martha was plainly sincere, and formed "the nearest approach in his life to a genuine love affair". Writing to her, he is tender and honestly interested. Through the letters there runs constantly a playfulness which matches at times even that of Cowper.

Sept. 7, 1733.

You cannot think how melancholy this place makes me. Every part of this wood puts into my mind poor Mr. Gay, with whom I passed once a great deal of pleasant time in it, and another friend, who is near dead, and quite lost to us, Dr. Swift. I really can find no enjoyment in the place; the same sort of uneasiness as I find at Twickenham, whenever I pass my mother's room.

I have not yet writ to Mrs. G——. I think I should, but have nothing to say that will answer the character they consider me in, as a wit; besides, my eyes grow very bad, (whatever is the cause of it,) I will put them out for nobody but a friend:

and, I protest, it brings tears into them almost to write to you, when I think of your state and mine. I long to write to Swift, but cannot. The greatest pain I know, is to say things so very short of one's meaning, when the heart is full.

I feel the going out of life fast enough, to have little appetite left to make compliments, at best useless, and for the most part unfelt speeches. It is but in a very narrow circle that friendship walks in this world, and I care not to tread out of it more than I needs must; knowing well, it is but to two or three (if quite so many) that any man's welfare, or memory, can be of consequence: the rest, I believe, I may forget, and be pretty certain they are already even, if not beforehand with me.

Life, after the first warm heats are over, is all downhill: and one almost wishes the journey's end, provided we were sure but to lie down easy whenever the night should overtake us. . . .

It is a real truth, that to the last of my moments, the thought of you, and the best of my wishes for you, will attend you, told or untold.

I could wish you had once the constancy and resolution to act for yourself: whether before or after I leave you, (the only way I ever shall leave you,) you must determine; but reflect that the first would make me, as well as yourself, happier; the latter could make you only so. Adieu.

RICHARD STEELE

1672–1729

Letter 35. Richard Steele to Mary Scurlock

Steele was born in Dublin: his mother was probably of pure Irish stock. Losing his father while still a child, he fortunately secured the influence of the Duke of Ormonde, and was sent to school at the Charterhouse, where he met and began his friendship with Addison. To Oxford he went in 1690, and four years later enlisted as a soldier. By 1700, having risen from the ranks to a captaincy, he had begun to win notice as a wit at Will's Coffee-house, and shortly after produced three of his comedies. In September, 1707, he married his second wife, Mary Scurlock (his "dear Prue"), a Welsh lady of some property. Happily his letters to her, some 400, have been preserved, and disclose a domestic interior, revealing and piquant, of rare completeness. In his *Journal to Stella* Swift writes of Steele: "He is governed by his wife most abominably". In 1718 Mary Scurlock, now Lady Steele, died; and the remaining ten years of her husband's life were neither happy nor productive. He managed to quarrel even with his lifelong friend Addison, and was constantly worried by debts.

St. James's Coffee-house, *September* 1, 1707.

Madam,—

It is the hardest thing in the world to be in love and yet attend to business. As for me, all who speak to me find me out, and I must lock myself up, or other people will do it for me. A gentleman asked me this morning, What news from Lisbon? and I answered, She's exquisitely handsome. Another desired to know when I had been last at Hampton Court; I replied, 'Twill be on Tuesday come se'nnight. Prithee, allow me at least to kiss your hand before that day, that my mind may be in some composure. O love!

> A thousand torments dwell about thee,
> Yet who could live to live without thee?

Methinks I could write a volume to you, but all the language on earth would fail in saying how much, and with what disinterested passion, I am ever yours,

RICH. STEELE.

LETTER 36. RICHARD STEELE TO HIS WIFE MARY

August 12, 1708.

MADAM,—

I have your letter wherein you let me know that the little dispute we have had is far from being a trouble to you; nevertheless I assure you any disturbance between us is the greatest affliction to me imaginable. You talk of the judgement of the world. I shall never govern my actions by it, but by the rules of morality and right reason. I love you better than the light of my eyes or the life-blood in my heart, but when I have let you know that, you are also to understand that neither my sight shall be so far enchanted, or my affection so much master of me as to make me forget our common interest. To attend my business as I ought, and improve my fortune, it is necessary that my time and my will should be under no direction but my own. Pray give my most humble service to Mrs. Binns. I write all this rather to explain my own thoughts to you than answer your letter distinctly. I enclose it to you that upon second thoughts you may see the disrespectful manner in which you treat

Yr. affectionate faithful husband,

R. STEELE.

Letters 37–8–9. Richard Steele to his wife Mary

Steele was appointed by Harley in 1704 editor of the *Gazette*, the official organ of the Government. His salary was £300 per annum. This post he lost in October, 1710, owing to essays in the *Tatler*, which satirized Harley. The first two of the following notes—Steele dignifies them with the name "letters"—contain references to his employment as "Gazetteer".

Sept. 20, 1708.

Dear Prue,—

If a servant I sent last night got to Hampton Court, you received 29 walnuts and a letter from me. I enclose the *Gazette*, and am, with all my soul,

Your passionate lover, and faithful husband,

Rich. Steele.

Since I writ the above I have found half a hundred more of walnuts, which I send herewith.

From the Press, One in the Morning, *Sept.* 30, 1710.

Dear Prue,—

I am very sleepy and tired, but could not think of closing my eyes till I had told you I am, dearest creature,

Your most affectionate and faithful husband,

Richard Steele.

BLOOMSBURY SQUARE, *Dec.* 24, 1713.

DEAR PRUE,—

I dine with Lord Halifax and shall be at home half hour after six.

For thee I die, for thee I languish.

RICHARD STEELE.

LETTER 40. RICHARD STEELE TO JONATHAN SWIFT

In April, 1709, appeared the first number of the *Tatler*, in which Steele assumed the rôle of Isaac Bickerstaff, a benevolent observer of human faults and frailties. Steele was at this time on friendly terms with Swift, who wrote a few of the *Tatler* papers. Then came an unhappy quarrel. Steele attacked Swift in print. Swift wrote to Addison bitterly accusing Steele of ingratitude. Unfortunately, instead of smoothing matters, Addison gave Swift's letter to Steele. The result was a splenetic correspondence little to Swift's credit and less to Steele's.

BLOOMSBURY, *May* 26, 1713.

SIR,—

I have received yours, and find it is impossible for a man to judge in his own case. For an allusion to you, as one under the imputation of helping the *Examiner*, and owning I was restrained out of respect to you, you tell Addison, under your hand, "you think me the vilest of mankind", and bid him tell me so. I am obliged to you for any kind things said in my behalf to the Treasurer; and assure you, when you were in Ireland, you were the constant subject of my talk to men in power at that time. As to the vilest of mankind, it would be a glorious world if I were: for I would not conceal my thoughts in favour of an injured man, though all the powers on earth gainsaid it,

to be made the first man in the nation. This position I know will ever obstruct my way in the world; and I have conquered my desires accordingly. I have resolved to content myself with what I can get by my own industry, and the improvement of a small estate, without being anxious whether I am ever in a court again or not. I do assure you, I do not speak this calmly, after the ill usage in your letter to Addison, out of terror of your wit or my Lord Treasurer's power; but pure kindness to the agreeable qualities I once so passionately delighted in in you.

You know, I know nobody, but one that talked after you, could tell "Addison had bridled me in point of party". This was ill hinted, both with relation to him, and, Sir,

Your most obedient humble servant,

RICH. STEELE.

I know no party; but the truth of the question is what I will support as well as I can, when any man I honour is attacked.

JOSEPH ADDISON

1672-1719

LETTER 41. JOSEPH ADDISON TO JOHN HUGHES

Addison was born at Milston, in Wiltshire, and got his scholarship at Lichfield (where his father was dean) and at the Charterhouse. He went up to Oxford in 1687. A fine Latin poem on the Peace of Ryswick brought him in 1697 an allowance from the Government of £300 a year, on which it was intended that he should travel and fit himself for diplomatic

service. Between the years 1699 and 1703 he made a tour of the Continent. *The Campaign*, in honour of the victory at Blenheim, appeared in 1704, and established his reputation. He became Secretary to the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland in 1709, but lost office on the fall of the Whigs (1711). By this time he had begun to contribute to Steele's paper, the *Tatler*, and, when this was suddenly suspended in 1711, the two friends started the *Spectator*, maintaining it till Dec. 1712. In the later issue, Jun.–Dec. 1714, Steele had no part.

The *Spectator* was one of a large number of rival periodicals. A crowd of similar ventures contended for public favour. Almost every week saw a new aspirant under an alluring title making a bid for popularity. John Hughes was at this time meditating a venture with Sir Richard Blackmore. The two issued, under the title of the "Lay Monk", a series of forty essays, beginning in November, 1713. Hughes took a warm interest in the production of *Cato* (1713), and was a contributor to both *Tatler* and *Spectator*.

BILTON, *October* 12, 1713.

DEAR SIR,—

I am very much obliged to you for your kind letter and the specimen, which I read over with great pleasure. I think the title of the *Register* would be less assuming than that of the *Humanity-Club*; but to tell you truly, I have been so taken up with thoughts of that nature for these two or three years last past, that I must now take some time *pour me délasser*, and lay in fuel for future work. In the meantime I should be glad if you would set such a project on foot, for I know nobody else capable of succeeding in it, and turning it to the good of mankind, since my friend has laid it down. I am in a thousand troubles for poor Dick, and wish that his zeal for the public may not be ruinous to himself; but he has sent me word that he is determined to go on, and that any advice I can give him in this particular will have no weight with him.

I beg you will present my most sincere respects to Sir Richard Blackmore, and that you will add my sister's, who is now with me, and very much his humble servant. I wish I could see him and yourself in these parts, where I think of staying a month or two longer.

Letter 42. Joseph Addison to Alexander Pope

The first volume of Pope's translation of the *Iliad* appeared in 1715. Subscriptions for the work were invited as early as November, 1713. Pope was anxious at the outset to secure Addison's approval, and his appeal produced the letter below. By October, 1714, Pope had completed two books, and writes (Oct. 10) asking Addison to do him the favour of looking over "the two first books of my translation of Homer, which are in the hands of Lord Halifax. I am sensible how much the reputation of any poetical work will depend upon the character you give it."

October 26, 1713.

I was extremely glad to receive a letter from you, but more so upon reading the contents of it. The work you mention will, I dare say, very sufficiently recommend itself when your name appears with the proposals: and if you think I can any way contribute to the forwarding them, you cannot lay a greater obligation upon me, than by employing me in such an office. As I have an ambition in having it known that you are my friend, I shall be very proud of shewing it by this or any other instance. I question not but your translation will enrich our tongue, and do honour to our country; for I conclude of it already from those performances with which you have obliged the public. I would only have you consider how it may most turn to your

advantage. Excuse my impertinence in this particular, which proceeds from my zeal for your ease and happiness. The work would cost you a great deal of time, and, unless you undertake it, will, I am afraid, never be executed by any other; at least I know none of this age that is equal to it besides yourself.

I am at present wholly immersed in country business, and begin to take a delight in it. I wish I might hope to see you here some time, and will not despair of it, when you engage in a work that will require solitude and retirement.

Letter 43. Joseph Addison to Jonathan Swift

In 1716 Addison made his dignified marriage with the Countess of Warwick. Report ran that the union was unhappy. Of this there is not much evidence beyond Pope's spiteful reference in the *Epistle to Arbuthnot* ("marrying discord with a noble wife"). The following letter to Swift tells in the other direction, for, as Mr. Courthope says, "a henpecked husband would hardly have invited the Dean of St. Patrick's to be the witness of his domestic discomfort". Addison was appointed Secretary of State with Sunderland in 1717, and retired in March, 1718, with a pension of £1500 a year.

March 20, 1717–18.

Dear Sir,—

Multiplicity of business and a long dangerous fit of sickness have prevented me from answering the obliging letter you honoured me with some time since; but, God be thanked, I cannot make use of either of these excuses at present, being entirely free both of my office and my asthma. I dare not, however, venture myself abroad yet, but

have sent the contents of your last to a friend of mine (for he is very much so, though he is my successor), who I hope will turn it to the advantage of the gentleman whom you mention. I know you have so much zeal and pleasure in doing kind offices to those you wish well to, that I hope you represent the hardship of the case in the strongest colours that it can possibly bear. However, as I always honoured you for your good nature, which is a very odd quality to celebrate in a man who has talents so much more shining in the eyes of the world, I should be glad if I could any way concur with you in putting a stop to what you say is now in agitation.

I must here condole with you upon the loss of that excellent man the Bishop of Derry, who has scarcely left behind him his equal in humanity, agreeable conversation, and all kinds of learning. We have often talked of you with great pleasure; and upon this occasion I cannot but reflect upon myself, who, at the same time that I omit no opportunity of expressing my esteem for you to others, have been so negligent in doing it to yourself. I have several times taken up my pen to write to you, but have always been interrupted by some impertinence or other; and, to tell you unreservedly, I have been unwilling to answer so agreeable a letter, as that I received from you, with one written in form only; but I must still have continued silent, had I deferred writing till I could have made a suitable return. Shall we never again talk together in laconic? Whenever you see England your company will be the most acceptable in the world at Holland House, where you are highly esteemed by Lady Warwick and the

young lord; though by none anywhere more than by, sir,

Your most faithful and most humble
and obedient servant,

J. ADDISON.

SAMUEL RICHARDSON

1689-1761

LETTER 44. SAMUEL RICHARDSON TO MISS MULSO

Richardson was born in a humble Derbyshire home, and in 1706 went to London to be apprenticed to a printer in Aldersgate Street. He was able to set up for himself in 1719, and prospered, attaining the lucrative dignity of King's Law Printer. He built a country house at Hammersmith. From early days he wielded a fluent pen, and in his village he wrote letters for less fluent or less educated lovers. At the age of fifty he received proposals from two booksellers that he should write a series of model letters on "the useful concerns in common life". Out of these grew *Pamela*. His greater work, *Clarissa Harlowe*, appeared in 1747. After *Sir Charles Grandison* (1753) he published nothing. He was the centre of a small circle of devotees, mostly feminine, in whose admiration he delighted. At Bath or Tunbridge Wells he might occasionally be seen "in his flaxen wig, furtively shuffling along the side walks, one hand in his bosom, the other at his chin, or grasping his cane-head beneath his coat-tails, shyly distrustful of strangers, but brightening into a fluttered benignity upon the approach of some member of the little consistory of feminine flatterers whom he called 'my ladies'". Among these was Hester or "Hecky" Mulso, the daughter of a Northamptonshire squire, better known as Mrs. Chapone. She afterwards attained some literary fame, and won the notice of Queen Caroline by her *Letters upon the Improvement of the Mind.* Ardent and susceptible, she was, at the same time, not one of Richardson's "neck-or-nothing flatterers". She told him that he carried his notions of parental authority too far. She pleased

him by her disapproval of Fielding, though she had to confess her admiration for *Amelia*. Richardson delighted in her controversial thrusts, calling her "a little spitfire". In the letter he discusses with her the character of his favourite hero, Sir Charles Grandison.

September 3, 1751.

You tell me, my dear Miss Mulso, "that I am really such a bamboozler on the subject of love, that you can't tell what to make of me". Sometimes, say you, I am persuaded that "you have a noble and just idea of the noblest kind of love"; and sometimes I think that "you and I have different ideas of the passion".

In another place you are offended with the word gratitude; as if your idea of love excluded gratitude.

And further on, you are offended that I call this same passion "a little selfish passion".

And you say that you have known few girls, and still fewer men, whom you have thought "capable of being in love".

"By this", proceed you, "you will see, that my ideas of the word love are different from yours, when you call it a little selfish passion."

Now, madam, if that passion is not little and selfish that makes two vehement souls prefer the gratification of each other, often to a sense of duty, and always to the whole world without them, be pleased to tell me what it is. And pray be so good as to define to me what the noble passion is, of which so few people of either sex are capable. Give me your ideas of it.

I put not this question as a puzzler, a bamboozler, but purely for information; and that I may make my Sir Charles susceptible of the

generous (may I say generous?) flame; and yet know what he is about, yet be a reasonable man.

Harriet's passion is founded in gratitude for relief given her in a great exigence. But the man who rescued her is not, it seems, to have such a word as gratitude in his head in return for her love.

I repeat that I will please you if I can; please you, Miss Mulso, I here mean (before, I meant not you particularly, my dear, but your sex), in Sir Charles's character; and I sincerely declare, that I would rather form his character to your liking, than to the liking of three parts out of four of the persons I am acquainted with.

You are one of my best girls and best judges. Of whom have I the opinion that I have of Miss Mulso on these nice subjects?—I ask, therefore, repeatedly for your definition of the passion which you dignify by the word noble, and from which you exclude everything mean, little, or selfish.

And you really think it marvellous that a young woman should find a man of exalted merit to be in love with?—Why, truly, I am half of your mind; for how should people find what, in general, they do not seek?—Yet what good creatures are many girls!—They will be in love for all that.

Why, yes, to be sure, they would be glad of a Sir Charles Grandison, and prefer him even to a Lovelace, were he capable of being terribly in love. And yet, I know one excellent girl who "is afraid that ladies in general will think him too wise".—Dear, dear girls, help me to a few monkey tricks to throw into his character, in order to shield him from contempt for his wisdom.

"It is one of my maxims", you say, "that

people even of bad hearts will admire and love people of good ones." Very true!—And yet admiration and love, in the sense before us, do not always shake hands, except at parting, and with an intention never to meet again. I have known women who professed to admire good men; but have chosen to marry men—not so good, when lovers of both sorts have tendered themselves to their acceptance. There is something very pretty in the sound of the word wild, added to the word fellow; and good sense is a very grateful victim to be sacrificed on the altar of love. Fervour and extravagance in expression will please. How shall a woman, who, moreover, loves to be admired, know a man's heart, but from his lips?—Let him find flattery, and she will find credulity. Sweet souls! can they be always contradicting?

"You believe it is not in human nature, however depraved, to prefer evil to good in another, whatever people may do in themselves." Why, no one would really think so, did not experience convince us that many, very many young women, in the article of marriage, though not before to be thought to be very depraved, are taken by this green sickness of the soul, and prefer dirt and rubbish to wholesome diet. The result of the matter is this, with very many young women: they will admire a good man, but they will marry a bad one. Are not rakes pretty fellows?

But one thing let me add to comfort you in relation to Harriet's difficulties: I intend to make her shine by her cordial approbation, as she goes along, of every good action of her beloved. She is humbled by her love (suspense in love is a mortifier) to think herself inferior to his

sisters; but I intend to raise her above them, even in her own just opinion, and when she shines out the girl worthy of a man, not exalt but reward her, and at the same time make him think himself highly rewarded by the love of so frank and so right an heart.

There now!—will that do, my Miss Mulso?

I laid indeed a heavy hand on the good Clarissa. But I had begun with her, with a view to the future saint in her character; and could she, but by sufferings, shine as she does! Do you, my dear child, look upon me as your paternal friend,

S. Richardson.

LADY MARY WORTLEY MONTAGU

1689–1762

Lady Mary (as she is best known) is a letter-writer whose printed correspondence extends over fifty-three years. She was the daughter of Evelyn Pierrepoint, afterwards Duke of Kingston. As a girl, her education was left much in her own hands. She had the run of her father's library, and devoured old romances and dramas. She claimed to have taught herself Latin. In 1712 she married Edward Wortley Montagu, who was several years her senior. Shortly afterwards we find her on a friendly footing with Addison, Congreve, and Pope. She went with her husband to Constantinople when, in June, 1716, he was appointed Ambassador to Turkey. On their return, at the close of 1718, they settled at Twickenham. Lady Mary became a leader in society, and Pope paid eager court to one so clever and distinguished. She had been the inspiration of his *Epistle of Eloisa to Abelard*; her portrait was painted for him in 1719 by Godfrey Kneller.

Letter 45. Lady Mary to Mr. P[ope]

Throughout her letters Lady Mary shows herself a keen observer, a vivid describer, a first-rate gossip. She wrote with an eye to the future. In her own time her letters attracted notice by their disclosures of Turkish life. To-day we read them for their living and intimate pictures of social life in England and on the Continent. Speaking of Madame de Sévigné's letters she says: "Very pretty they are, but I assert without the least vanity that mine will be full as entertaining forty years hence". The prophecy has almost come true.

(Constantinople) *Sept.* 1, 1717.

When I wrote to you last, Belgrade was in the hands of the Turks; but at this present moment it has changed masters and is in the hands of the Imperialists. A janissary, who in nine days, and yet without any wings but what a panic terror seems to have furnished, arrived at Constantinople from the army of the Turks before Belgrade, brought Mr. W. the news of a complete victory obtained by the Imperialists, commanded by Prince Eugene, over the Ottoman troops. . . .

You see here that I give you a very handsome return for your obliging letter. You entertain me with a most agreeable account of your amiable connections with men of letters and taste, and of the delicious moments you pass in their society under the rural shade; and I exhibit to you in return, the barbarous spectacle of Turks and Germans cutting one another's throats. But what can you expect from such a country as this, from which the Muses have fled, from which letters seem eternally banished, and in which you see, in private scenes, nothing pursued as happiness but the refinements of an indolent voluptuousness, and where those who act upon the public theatre live in un-

certainty, suspicion, and terror! Here pleasure, to which I am no enemy, when it is properly seasoned and of a good composition, is surely of the cloying kind. Veins of wit, elegant conversation, easy commerce, are unknown among the Turks; and yet they seem capable of all these, if the vile spirit of their government did not stifle genius, damp curiosity, and suppress a hundred passions that embellish and render life agreeable. The luscious passion of the seraglio is the only one almost that is gratified here to the full, but it is blended so with the surly spirit of despotism in one of the parties, and with the dejection and anxiety which this spirit produces in the other, that to one of my way of thinking it cannot appear otherwise than as a very mixed kind of enjoyment. The women here are not, indeed, so closely confined as many have related; they enjoy a high degree of liberty, even in the bosom of servitude, and they have methods of evasion and disguise that are very favourable to gallantry; but, after all, they are still under uneasy apprehensions of being discovered; and a discovery exposes them to the most merciless rage of jealousy, which is here a monster that cannot be satiated but with blood. The magnificence and riches that reign in the apartments of the ladies of fashion here, seem to be one of their chief pleasures, joined with their retinue of female slaves, whose music, dancing, and dress amuse them highly;—but there is such an air of form and stiffness amidst this grandeur, as hinders it from pleasing me at long run, however I was dazzled with it at first sight. This stiffness and formality of manners are peculiar to the Turkish ladies; for the Grecian belles are

of quite another character and complexion; with them pleasure appears in more engaging forms, and their persons, manners, conversation, and amusements are very far from being destitute of elegance and ease.

I received the news of Mr. Addison's being declared secretary of state with the less surprise, in that I know that post was almost offered to him before. At that time he declined it, and [I] really believe that he would have done well to have declined it now. Such a post as that, and such a wife as the countess, do not seem to be, in prudence, eligible for a man that is asthmatic, and we may see the day when he will be heartily glad to resign them both. It is well that he laid aside the thoughts of the voluminous dictionary, of which I have heard you or somebody else frequently make mention. But no more on that subject; I would not have said so much, were I not assured that this letter will come safe and unopened to hand. I long much to tread upon English ground, that I may see you and Mr. Congreve, who render that ground classic ground; nor will you refuse our present secretary a part of that merit, whatever reasons you may have to be dissatisfied with him in other respects. You are the three happiest poets I ever heard of; one a secretary of state, the other enjoying leisure with dignity in two lucrative employments; and you, though your religious profession is an obstacle to court promotion, and disqualifies you from filling civil employments, have found the philosopher's stone, since by making the Iliad pass through your poetical crucible into an English form, without losing aught of its original beauty, you have drawn

the golden current of Pactolus to Twickenham. I call this finding the philosopher's stone, since you alone found out the secret and nobody else has got into it. A——n [Addison] and T——l [Tickell] tried it, but their experiments failed; and they lost, if not their money, at least a certain portion of their fame in the trial;—while you touched the mantle of the divine bard, and imbibed his spirit. I hope we shall have the Odyssey soon from your happy hand, and I think I shall follow with singular pleasure the traveller Ulysses, who was an observer of men and manners, when he travels in your harmonious numbers. I love him much better than the hot-headed son of Peleus, who bullied his general, cried for his mistress, and so on. It is true, the excellence of the Iliad does not depend upon his merit or dignity, but I wish, nevertheless, that Homer had chosen a hero somewhat less pettish and less fantastic: a perfect hero is chimerical and unnatural, and consequently uninstructive; but it is also true that while the epic hero ought to be drawn with the infirmities that are the lot of humanity, he ought never to be represented as extremely absurd. But it becomes me ill to play the critic; so I take my leave of you for this time, and desire you will believe me, with the highest esteem,

Yours, &c.

Letter 46. Lady Mary to Mr. P[ope]

Dover, *Nov.* 1, [1718].

I have this minute received a letter of yours, sent me from Paris. I believe and hope I shall very soon see both you and Mr. Congreve; but

as I am here in an inn, where we stay to regulate our march to London, bag and baggage, I shall employ some of my leisure time in answering that part of yours that seems to require an answer.

I must applaud your good nature, in supposing that your pastoral lovers (vulgarly called hay-makers) would have lived in everlasting joy and harmony, if the lightning had not interrupted their scheme of happiness. I see no reason to imagine that John Hughes and Sarah Drew were either wiser or more virtuous than their neighbours. That a well-set man of twenty-five should have a fancy to marry a brown woman of eighteen, is nothing marvellous; and I cannot help thinking, that, had they married, their lives would have passed in the common track with their fellow parishioners. His endeavouring to shield her from the storm, was a natural action, and what he would have certainly done for his horse, if he had been in the same situation. Neither am I of opinion, that their sudden death was a reward of their mutual virtue. You know the Jews were reproved for thinking a village destroyed by fire more wicked than those that had escaped the thunder. Time and chance happen to all men. Since you desire me to try my skill in an epitaph, I think the following lines perhaps more just, though not so poetical as yours:

Here lies John Hughes and Sarah Drew;
Perhaps you 'll say, what 's that to you?
Believe me, friend, much may be said
On this poor couple that are dead.
On Sunday next they should have married;
But see how oddly things are carried!
On Thursday last it rain'd and lighten'd;
These tender lovers, sadly frighten'd,

Shelter'd beneath the cocking hay,
In hopes to pass the storm away;
But the bold thunder found them out
(Commission'd for that end, no doubt),
And, seizing on their trembling breath,
Consign'd them to the shades of death.
Who knows if 't was not kindly done?
For had they seen the next year's sun,
A beaten wife and cuckold swain
Had jointly curs'd the marriage chain;
Now they are happy in their doom,
For P. has wrote upon their tomb.

I confess, these sentiments are not altogether so heroic as yours; but I hope you will forgive them in favour of the two last lines. You see how much I esteem the honour you have done them; though I am not very impatient to have the same, and had rather continue to be your stupid living humble servant, than be celebrated by all the pens in Europe.

I would write to Mr. C. [Congreve], but suppose you will read this to him, if he enquires after me.

Letter 47. Lady Mary to Dr. Arbuthnot

The two preceding letters were written before the breach with Pope. The cause of this famous quarrel is obscure. Pope told Arbuthnot he had refused to write a satire on someone, when requested to do so by Lady Mary. Dilke conjectured that the source of the trouble was her ridicule of the poem on the lovers (Letters 32 and 46). Another account says that Pope made a declaration of love which was received by Lady Mary with an outburst of merriment. A coarse lampoon upon her, from the pen of Swift, published in the *Miscellany*, 1726, hints at previous lampoons which had been attributed to her. In appealing to John Arbuthnot, Lady Mary turned to the most chivalrous member of the "Scriblerus Club", formed by the alliance of Swift and himself with the younger wits Pope and Gay. Born in 1667, the son of a Scotch clergyman, Arbuthnot had by 1709 attained

the dignity of Court Physician. He is famous for his *History of John Bull* (1712). Swift said of him: "The doctor has more wit than we all have, and his humanity is equal to his wit". "If there were a dozen Arbuthnots in the world", he told Pope, "I would burn my *Travels*". Cf. Pope's *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* (1735).

[*October*, 1730?]

SIR,—

Since I saw you I have made some inquiries, and heard more, of the story you was so kind to mention to me. I am told Pope has had the surprising impudence to assert he can bring the lampoon when he pleases to produce it, under my own hand; I desire he may be made to keep to this offer. If he is so skilful in counterfeiting hands, I suppose he will not confine that great talent to the gratifying his malice, but take some occasion to increase his fortune by the same method, and I may hope (by such practices) to see him exalted according to his merit, which nobody will rejoice at more than myself. I beg of you, sir (as an act of justice), to endeavour to set the truth in an open light, and then I leave to your judgment the character of those who have attempted to hurt mine in so barbarous a manner. I can assure you (in particular) you named a lady to me (as abused in this libel) whose name I never heard before, and, as I never had any acquaintance with Dr. Swift, am an utter stranger to all his affairs and even his person, which I never saw to my knowledge, and am now convinced the whole is a contrivance of Pope's to blast the reputation of one who never injured him. I am not more sensible of his injustice, than I am, sir, of your [*sic*] candour, generosity, and good sense I have found in you, which has obliged me to be with a very uncommon warmth your real

friend, and I heartily wish for an opportunity of showing I am so more effectually than by subscribing myself your very humble servant.

Letter 48. Lady Mary to the Countess of Bute

From the year 1739, Lady Mary lived for the most part by herself in Italy, whence she wrote many of her best letters. The most delightful are those addressed to her daughter, the Countess of Bute, from whom she received parcels of new books, and with whom she discusses all kinds of matters, literary and domestic.

March 1, N.S. [1752].

Dear Child,—

I have now finished your books, and I believe you will think I have made quick despatch. To say truth, I have read night and day. . . . I was such an old fool as to weep over Clarissa Harlowe, like any milkmaid of sixteen over the ballad of the Lady's Fall. To say truth, the first volume softened me by a near resemblance of my maiden days; but on the whole 'tis most miserable stuff. Miss How, who is called a young lady of sense and honour, is not only extreme silly, but a more vicious character than Sally Martin, whose crimes are owing at first to seduction, and afterwards to necessity; while this virtuous damsel, without any reason, insults her mother at home and ridicules her abroad; abuses the man she marries; and is impertinent and impudent with great applause. Even that model of affection, Clarissa, is so faulty in her behaviour as to deserve little compassion. Any girl that runs

away with a young fellow, without intending to marry him, should be carried to Bridewell or to Bedlam the next day. Yet the circumstances are so laid, as to inspire tenderness, notwithstanding the low style and absurd incidents; and I look upon this and Pamela to be two books that will do more general mischief than the works of Lord Rochester. There is something humorous in R. Random, that makes me believe that the author is H. Fielding. I am horribly afraid I guess too well the writer of these abominable insipidities of Cornelia, Leonora, and the Ladies' Drawing Room.—I fancy you are now saying, 'tis a sad thing to grow old; what does my poor mamma mean by troubling me with criticisms on books that nobody but herself will ever read? You must allow something to my solitude. I have a pleasure in writing to my dear child, and not many subjects to write upon. The adventures of people here would not at all amuse you, having no acquaintance with the persons concerned; and an account of myself would hardly gain credit, after having fairly owned to you how deplorably I was misled in regard to my own health; though I have all my life been on my guard against the information by the sense of hearing; it being one of my earliest observations, the universal inclination of human-kind is to be led by the ears; and I am sometimes apt to imagine, that they are given to men, as they are to pitchers, purposely that they may be carried about by them. This consideration should abate my wonder to see (as I do here) the most astonishing legends embraced as the most sacred truths, by those who have always heard them asserted, and never contradicted; they even

place a merit in complying in direct opposition to the evidence of all their other senses. . . .

Letter 49. Lady Mary to the Countess of Bute

Lovere, *July* 20, 1754.

My Dear Child,—

I have now read over the books you were so good to send, and intend to say something of them all, though some are not worth speaking of. I shall begin, in respect to his dignity, with Lord Bolingbroke, who is a glaring proof how far vanity can blind a man, and how easy it is to varnish over to one's self the most criminal conduct. He declares he always loved his country, though he confesses he endeavoured to betray her to popery and slavery; and loved his friends, though he abandoned them in distress, with all the blackest circumstances of treachery. His account of the peace of Utrecht is almost equally unfair or partial. I shall allow that, perhaps, the views of the Whigs, at that time, were too vast, and the nation, dazzled by military glory, had hopes too sanguine; but surely the same terms that the French consented to, at the treaty of Gertruydenberg, might have been obtained; or if the displacing of the Duke of Marlborough raised the spirits of our enemies to a degree of refusing what they had before offered, how can he excuse the guilt of removing him from the head of a victorious army, and exposing us to submit to any articles of peace, being unable to continue the war? I agree with him, that the idea of conquering France is a wild extravagant notion, and

would, if possible, be impolitic; but she might have been reduced to such a state, as would have rendered her incapable of being terrible to her neighbours for some ages: nor should we have been obliged, as we have done almost ever since, to bribe the French ministers to let us live in quiet. So much for his political reasonings, which, I confess, are delivered in a florid easy style; but I cannot be of Lord Orrery's opinion, that he is one of the best English writers. Well turned periods, or smooth lines, are not the perfection either of prose or verse; they may serve to adorn, but can never stand in the place of good sense. Copiousness of words, however ranged, is always false eloquence, though it will ever impose on some sort of understandings. How many readers and admirers has Madame de Sévigné, who only gives us, in a lively manner and fashionable phrases, mean sentiments, vulgar prejudices, and endless repetitions? Sometimes the tittle tattle of a fine lady, sometimes that of an old nurse, always tittle tattle; yet so well gilt over by airy expressions, and a flowing style, she will always please the same people to whom Lord Bolingbroke will shine as a first-rate author. She is so far to be excused, as her letters were not intended for the press; while he labours to display to posterity all the wit and learning he is master of, and sometimes spoils a good argument by a profusion of words, running out into several pages a thought that might have been more clearly expressed in a few lines, and, what is more, often falls into contradiction and repetitions, which are almost unavoidable to all voluminous writers, and can only be forgiven to those retailers, whose necessity

compels them to diurnal scribbling, who load their meaning with epithets, and run into digressions, because (in the jockey phrase) it rids ground, that is, covers a certain quantity of paper, to answer the demand of the day. A great part of Lord Bolingbroke's letters are designed to show his reading, which, indeed, appears to have been very extensive; but I cannot perceive that such a minute account of it can be of any use to the pupil he pretends to instruct, nor can I help thinking he is far below either Tillotson or Addison, even in style, though the latter was sometimes more diffuse than his judgment approved, to furnish out the length of a daily *Spectator*. I own I have small regard for Lord Bolingbroke as an author, and the highest contempt for him as a man. He came into the world greatly favoured both by nature and fortune, blest with a noble birth, heir to a large estate, endowed with a strong constitution, and, as I have heard, a beautiful figure, high spirits, a good memory, and a lively apprehension, which was cultivated by a learned education: all these glorious advantages being left to the direction of a judgment stifled by unbounded vanity, he dishonoured his birth, lost his estate, ruined his reputation, and destroyed his health, by a wild pursuit of eminence even in vice and trifles.

I am far from making misfortune a matter of reproach. I know there are accidental occurrences not to be foreseen or avoided by human prudence, by which a character may be injured, wealth dissipated or a constitution impaired: but I think I may reasonably despise the understanding of one who conducts himself in such a manner as naturally produces such lamentable consequences, and

continues in the same destructive paths to the end of a long life, ostentatiously boasting of morals and philosophy in print, and with equal ostentation bragging of the scenes of low debauchery in public conversation, though deplorably weak both in mind and body, and his virtue, and his vigour in a state of non-existence. His confederacy with Swift and Pope puts me in mind of that of Bessus and his sword-men, in the *King and No King*, who endeavour to support themselves by giving certificates of each other's merit.

Pope has triumphantly declared that they may do and say whatever silly things they please, they will still be the greatest geniuses nature ever exhibited. I am delighted with the comparison given of their benevolence, which is indeed most aptly figured by a circle in the water, which widens till it comes to nothing at all; but I am provoked at Lord Bolingbroke's misrepresentation of my favourite Atticus, who seems to have been the only Roman that, from good sense, had a true notion of the times in which he lived; in which the republic was inevitably perishing, and the two factions, who pretended to support it, equally endeavouring to gratify their ambition in its ruin. A wise man, in that case, would certainly declare for neither, and try to save himself and family from the general wreck, which could not be done but by a superiority of understanding acknowledged on both sides. I see no glory in losing life or fortune by being the dupe of either, and very much applaud the conduct which could preserve an universal esteem amidst the fury of opposite parties. We are obliged to act vigorously, where action can do any good; but in a storm, when it is im-

possible to work with success, the best hands and ablest pilots may laudably gain the shore if they can. Atticus could be a friend to men, without awaking their resentment, and be satisfied with his own virtue without seeking popular fame: he had the reward of his wisdom in his tranquillity, and will ever stand among the few examples of true philosophy, either ancient or modern.

You must forgive this tedious dissertation. I hope you read in the same spirit I write, and take as proofs of affection whatever is sent you by your truly tender mother,

M. WORTLEY.

LORD CHESTERFIELD

1694–1773

LETTER 50. THE EARL OF CHESTERFIELD TO DEAN SWIFT

Chesterfield entered the House of Lords on the death of his father (1726), and became an active member of the Tory opposition to Walpole, whom he had previously supported. At one period he was the close friend of Swift, Bolingbroke, and Pope. To-day, however, his name would be practically unknown but for the unique collection of letters written to his son, Philip Stanhope. It is true that Macaulay described the letters of Chesterfield as merely "the letters of a cleverish man", and said that his reputation would have been higher if they had never been published; but in this judgment Macaulay stands practically alone.

HAGUE, *December* 15, N.S. 1730.

SIR,—

You need not have made any excuse to me for your solicitation: on the contrary, I am proud

of being the first person to whom you have thought it worth the while to apply since those changes, which, you say, drove you into distance and obscurity. I very well know the person you recommend to me, having lodged at his house a whole summer at Richmond. I have always heard a very good character of him, which alone would incline me to serve him; but your recommendation, I can assure you, will make me impatient to do it. However, that he may not again meet with the common fate of court-suitors, nor I lie under the imputation of making court-promises, I will exactly explain to you how far it is likely I may be able to serve him.

When first I had this office, I took the resolution of turning out nobody; so that I shall only have the disposal of those places that the death of the present possessors will procure me. Some old servants, that have served me long and faithfully, have obtained the promises of the first four or five vacancies, and the early solicitations of some of my particular friends have tied me down for about as many more. But, after having satisfied these engagements, I do assure you, Mr. Launcelot shall be my first care. I confess, his prospect is more remote than I could have wished it; but, as it is so remote, he will not have the uneasiness of a disappointment, if he gets nothing; and if he gets something, we shall both be pleased.

As for his political principles, I am in no manner of pain about them. Were he a Tory, I would venture to serve him, in the just expectation that, should I ever be charged with having preferred a Tory, the person, who was the author of my crime, would likewise be the author of my vindication.

I am, with real esteem, Sir, your most obedient, humble servant.

Letter 51. The Earl of Chesterfield to Philip Stanhope

Chesterfield's letters to his son were intended to educate his taste and to form his manners. They poured in a steady stream upon the lad from his fifth year until his premature death, at the age of thirty-six. So far as we can judge, the son profited little by his father's counsels; and it is one of the ironies of history that this abundant labour was spent on one who died too early to accomplish any of the objects so solicitously set before him. That the letters were not intended for publication is obvious, not only from their intimacy but also from the outrageous advice given to the son on certain matters of morality. On Philip's death it was galling to his father to find that the son, whose confidence he had so constantly sought, had been for some years secretly married. He bore the shock well, wrote kindly to the widow (Eugenia), and had his grandchildren sent to a good school. The lady behaved less correctly. Before returning the original letters to their writer she made copies, which on Lord Chesterfield's death she sold for £1500.

London, *December* 18, O.S. 1747.

Dear Boy,—

As two mails are now due from Holland, I have no letters of yours or Mr. Harte's to acknowledge; so that this letter is the effect of that *scribendi cacoethes* which my fears, my hopes, and my doubts, concerning you, give me. When I have wrote you a very long letter upon any subject it is no sooner gone, but I think I have omitted something in it which might be of use to you: and then I prepare the supplement for the next post, or else some new subject occurs to me upon which I fancy that I can give you some information, or point some rules which may be advantageous to you.

This sets me to writing again, though God knows whether to any purpose or not; a few years more can only ascertain that. But, whatever my success may be, my anxiety and my care can only be the effects of that tender affection which I have for you and which you cannot represent to yourself greater than it really is. But do not mistake the nature of that affection, and think it of a kind that you may with impunity abuse. It is not natural affection, there being in reality no such thing; for, if there were, some inward sentiment must necessarily and reciprocally discover the parent to the child, and the child to the parent, without any exterior indications, knowledge, or acquaintance, whatsoever; which never happened since the creation of the world, whatever poets, romance or novel writers, and such sentiment-mongers, may be pleased to say to the contrary. Neither is my affection for you that of a mother, of which the only, or at least the chief objects, are health and life: I wish you them both most heartily; but, at the same time, I confess they are by no means my principal care.

My object is to have you fit to live; which, if you are not, I do not desire that you should live at all. My affection for you then is, and only will be, proportioned to your merit, which is the only affection that one rational being ought to have for another. Hitherto, I have discovered nothing wrong in your heart or your head: on the contrary, I think I see sense in the one and sentiment in the other. This persuasion is the only motive of my present affection, which will either increase or diminish according to your merit or demerit. If you have the knowledge, the honour, and the

probity which you may have, the marks and warmth of my affection shall amply reward them; but if you have them not, my aversion and indignation will rise in the same proportion; and in that case, remember, that I am under no further obligation than to give you the necessary means of subsisting. If ever we quarrel, do not expect or depend upon any weakness in my nature for a reconciliation, as children frequently do, and often meet with, from silly parents: I have no such weakness about me; and, as I will never quarrel with you but upon some essential point, if once we quarrel I will never forgive. But I hope and believe that this declaration (for it is no threat) will prove unnecessary. You are no stranger to the principles of virtue; and, surely, whoever knows virtue must love it. As for knowledge, you have already enough to engage you to acquire more. The ignorant only either despise it, or think that they have enough: those who have the most are always the most desirous to have more, and know that the most they can have is, alas! but too little.

Reconsider from time to time, and retain, the friendly advice which I send you. The advantage will be all your own.

Letter 52. The Earl of Chesterfield to Philip Stanhope

London, *February* 11, O.S. 1751.

My Dear Friend,—

When you go to the play, which I hope you do often, for it is a very instructive amusement,

you must certainly have observed the very different effects which the several parts have upon you, according as they are well or ill acted. The very best tragedy of Corneille's, if well spoken and acted, interests, engages, agitates, and affects your passions. Love, terror, and pity alternately possess you. But if ill spoken and acted, it would only excite your indignation or your laughter. Why? It is still Corneille's: it is the same sense, the same matter, whether well or ill acted. It is then merely the manner of speaking and acting that makes this great difference in the effects. Apply this to yourself, and conclude from it, that if you would either please in a private company or persuade in a public assembly, air, looks, gestures, graces, enunciation, proper accents, just emphasis, and tuneful cadences, are full as necessary as the matter itself. Let awkward, ungraceful, inelegant, and dull fellows say what they will in behalf of their solid matter and strong reasonings, and let them despise all those graces and ornaments, which engage the senses and captivate the heart; they will find (though they will possibly wonder why) that their rough unpolished matter, and their unadorned, coarse, but strong arguments, will neither please nor persuade, but, on the contrary, will tire out attention and excite disgust. We are so made, we love to be pleased better than to be informed; information is, in a certain degree, mortifying, as it implies our previous ignorance; it must be sweetened to be palatable.

To bring this directly to you; know that no man can make a figure in this country, but by Parliament. Your fate depends upon your success there as a speaker; and, take my word for it, that success

depends much more upon manner than matter. Mr. Pitt, and Mr. Murray, the Solicitor-General, uncle to Lord Stormont, are, beyond comparison, the best speakers; why? Only because they are the best orators. They alone can inflame or quiet the House; they alone are so attended to, in that numerous and noisy assembly, that you might hear a pin fall while either of them is speaking. Is it that their matter is better, or their arguments stronger, than other people's? Does the House expect extraordinary informations from them? Not in the least; but the House expects pleasure from them, and therefore attends; finds it, and therefore approves. Mr. Pitt, particularly, has very little Parliamentary knowledge; his matter is generally flimsy, and his arguments often weak: but his eloquence is superior, his action graceful, his enunciation just and harmonious; his periods are well turned, and every word he makes use of is the very best, and the most expressive that can be used in that place. This, and not his matter, made him Paymaster, in spite of both King and Ministers. From this, draw the obvious conclusion.

The same thing holds full as true in conversation, where even trifles, elegantly expressed, well looked, and accompanied with graceful action, will ever please, beyond all the home-spun, unadorned sense in the world. Reflect, on one side, how you feel within yourself, while you are forced to suffer the tedious, muddy, and ill-turned narration of some awkward fellow, even though the fact may be interesting; and on the other hand, with what pleasure you attend to the relation of a much less interesting matter, when elegantly expressed, gen-

teelly turned, and gracefully delivered. By attending carefully to all these *agrémens* in your daily conversation, they will become habitual to you, before you come into Parliament; and you will have nothing then to do but to raise them a little when you come there. I would wish you to be so attentive to this object, that I would not have you speak to your footman but in the very best words that the subject admits of, be the language which it will. Think of your words, and of their arrangement, before you speak; choose the most elegant, and place them in the best order. Consult your own ear, to avoid cacophony; and what is very near as bad, monotony. Think also of your gesture and looks, when you are speaking even upon the most trifling subjects. The same things differently expressed, looked, and delivered, cease to be the same things. The most passionate lover in the world cannot make a stronger declaration of love than the *Bourgeois Gentilhomme* does in this happy form of words, *Mourir d'amour me font belle Marquise vos beaux yeux.* I defy anybody to say more; and yet I would advise nobody to say that; and I would recommend you rather to smother and conceal your passion entirely than to reveal it in these words. Seriously, this holds in everything, as well as in that ludicrous instance. The French, to do them justice, attend very minutely to the purity, the correctness and the elegancy of their style, in conversation, and in their letters. *Bien narrer* is an object of their study; and though they sometimes carry it to affectation, they never sink into inelegancy, which is much the worst extreme of the two. Observe them, and form your French style upon theirs; for elegancy in one language

will reproduce itself in all. I knew a young man, who being just elected a member of Parliament, was laughed at for being discovered, through the keyhole of his chamber door, speaking to himself in the glass, and forming his looks and gestures. I could not join in that laugh, but on the contrary, thought him much wiser than those who laughed at him; for he knew the importance of those little graces in a public assembly, and they did not. Your little person (which I am told by the way is not ill-turned), whether in a laced coat, or a blanket, is specifically the same; but yet, I believe, you choose to wear the former; and you are in the right, for the sake of pleasing more.

The worst-bred man in Europe, if a lady let fall her fan, would certainly take it up and give it to her; the best-bred man in Europe could do no more. The difference however would be considerable; the latter would please by doing it gracefully; the former would be laughed at for doing it awkwardly. I repeat it, and repeat it again, and shall never cease repeating it to you, air, manners, graces, style, elegancy, and all those ornaments, must now be the only objects of your attention; it is now, or never, that you must acquire them. Postpone, therefore, all other considerations; make them now your serious study; you have not one moment to lose. The solid and the ornamental united are undoubtedly best; but were I reduced to make an option, I should, without hesitation, choose the latter.

I hope you assiduously frequent Marcel, and carry graces from him; nobody had more to spare than he had formerly. Have you learned to carve? for it is ridiculous not to carve well. A man who

tells you gravely that he cannot carve, may as well tell you that he cannot blow his nose; it is both as necessary and as easy.

Make my compliments to Lord Huntingdon, whom I love and honour extremely, as I dare say you do; I will write to him soon, though I believe he has hardly time to read a letter; and my letters to those I love are, as you know by experience, not very short ones; this is one proof of it, and this would have been longer, if the paper had been so. Good night, then, my dear child.

JOHN WESLEY

1703–1791

Wesley was educated at the Charterhouse and at Christchurch, Oxford. He obtained a fellowship at Lincoln in 1726, and held it till his marriage in 1751. As early as 1729 he distinguished himself at the University as the leader of the "Methodist" society. Under the influence of Whitefield, he took to field preaching (1739), becoming the greatest of itinerant ministers, and not only a religious but a literary power among the working classes of Britain. The first "conversation" or conference of his preachers was held in London, 1744. It was for his preachers that most of his numerous works were compiled. He wrote against the anti-taxation movement in the American colonies, 1775–8. In his long and laborious life he is said to have travelled 250,000 miles, and to have delivered 40,000 sermons. Horace Walpole thought him "as evidently an actor as Garrick"; while Scott, who heard him in 1782, admired his "many excellent stories", but thought him "too colloquial".

Letter 53. John Wesley to John King

The "overseer" of the Methodists was a copious letter-writer. Most of the letters preserved are short and written on a half-sheet. They deal generally with the religious

experience of converts and with the work of the preachers. They are invariably very plain-spoken. "I never think of my style at all," Wesley says, "but just set down the words that come first." His letters are rich in shrewd advice. Many of them, like this letter to John King—a preacher in America—must have brought the blood to the reader's cheek. Wives of preachers, who left dirty houses behind them, were not allowed to escape. Wesley called them "sluts". His postages must have been a heavy item of expenditure, as an ordinary letter cost tenpence; and very rarely did he get a "frank" from a peer or a member of Parliament. (See Appendix.)

Near LEEDS, *July* 28, 1775.

MY DEAR BROTHER,—

Always take advice or reproof as a favour: it is the surest mark of love.

I advised you once, and you took it as an affront; nevertheless I will do it once more.

Scream no more, at the peril of your soul. God now warns you by me, whom He has set over you.

Speak as earnestly as you can, but do not scream. Speak with all your heart, but with a moderate voice. It was said of our Lord, "He shall not *cry*"; the word properly means, He shall not *scream*. Herein be a follower of me, as I am of Christ. I often speak loud, often vehemently, but I never scream, I never strain myself. I dare not. I know it would be a sin against God and my own soul. Perhaps one reason why that good man, Thomas Walsh, yea and John Manners too, were in such grievous darkness before they died, was because they shortened their own lives.

O John, pray for an advisable and teachable temper! By nature you are very far from it: you are stubborn and headstrong. Your last letter was written in a very wrong spirit. If you cannot take

advice from others, surely you might take it from your affectionate brother,

JOHN WESLEY.

SAMUEL JOHNSON

1709–1784

The greatest literary dictator of any age was the son of a Lichfield bookseller. For fifty years his life was a fight with poverty. He had to leave Oxford (Pembroke College) without taking a degree. After an attempt to make a living for himself and his wife by teaching, he went with David Garrick, one of his pupils, to London (1737). His satire *London* was published the next year, and the *Life of Savage* in 1744. He began his colossal undertaking, the compilation of his *Dictionary*, in 1747. During the years 1750 to 1752 he issued the *Rambler*. The grant of a pension of £300 per annum by Lord Bute in 1762 freed him from want for the rest of his life. When a fuss was made by critics and political opponents over the granting of this, Johnson said, as he laughed at the noise, that he wished his pension were twice as large and the noise twice as great. Next year (1763) he founded the "Literary Club", which met at the Turk's Head, and lasted till recent years.

LETTER 54. SAMUEL JOHNSON TO JAMES BOSWELL

The historic meeting between Johnson and Boswell took place in May, 1763, at the shop of Davies, the bookseller. From their very first interview Boswell made notes of their conversations. Boswell wished to stay in London, but his father, Lord Auchinleck, threatened to disinherit him if he did not go on with his studies. Boswell, therefore, went to Utrecht and travelled on the Continent, paying his famous visit to Corsica in 1765. In 1768 he published his *Account of Corsica*, the first part being historical, followed by a short lively description of the tour.

BRIGHTHELMSTONE, *Sept.* 9, 1769.

DEAR SIR,—

Why do you charge me with unkindness? I have omitted nothing that could do you good, or give you pleasure, unless it be that I have forborne to tell you my opinion of your Account of Corsica. I believe my opinion, if you think well of my judgment, might have given you pleasure; but when it is considered how much vanity is excited by praise, I am not sure that it would have done you good. Your History is like other histories, but your Journal is in a very high degree curious and delightful. There is between the history and the journal that difference which there will always be found between notions borrowed from without, and notions generated within. Your history was copied from books; your journal rose out of your own experience and observation. You express images which operated strongly upon yourself, and you have impressed them with great force upon your readers. I know not whether I could name any narrative by which curiosity is better excited, or better gratified.

I am glad that you are going to be married; and as I wish you well in things of less importance, wish you well with proportionate ardour in this crisis of your life. What I can contribute to your happiness, I should be very unwilling to withhold; for I have always loved and valued you, and shall love you and value still more, as you become more regular and useful; effects which a happy marriage will hardly fail to produce.

I do not find that I am likely to come back very soon from this place. I shall, perhaps, stay a fortnight longer; and a fortnight is a long time to

a lover absent from his mistress. Would a fortnight ever have an end?

I am, dear sir, your most affectionate humble servant,

SAM. JOHNSON.

LETTER 55. SAMUEL JOHNSON TO JAMES BOSWELL

LONDON, *February* 22, 1773.

DEAR SIR,—

I have read your kind letter much more than the elegant Pindar which it accompanied. I am always glad to find myself not forgotten; and to be forgotten by you would give me great uneasiness. My northern friends have never been unkind to me: I have from you, dear Sir, testimonies of affection, which I have not often been able to excite; and Dr. Beattie rates the testimony which I was desirous of paying to his merit, much higher than I should have thought it reasonable to expect.

I have heard of your masquerade. What says your synod to such innovations? I am not studiously scrupulous, nor do I think a masquerade either evil in itself, or very likely to be the occasion of evil; yet as the world thinks it a very licentious relaxation of manners, I would not have been one of the *first* masquers in a country where no masquerade had ever been before.

A new edition of my great Dictionary is printed, from a copy which I was persuaded to revise; but having made no preparation, I was able to do very little. Some superfluities I have expunged, and some faults I have corrected, and here and there have scattered a remark; but the main fabric of

the work remains as it was. I had looked very little into it since I wrote it, and I think, I found it full as often better, as worse, than I expected.

Baretti and Davies have had a furious quarrel; a quarrel, I think, irreconcilable. Dr. Goldsmith has a new comedy which is expected in the spring. No name is yet given it. The chief diversion arises from a stratagem by which a lover is made to mistake his future father-in-law's house for an inn. This, you see, borders upon farce. The dialogue is quick and gay, and the incidents are so prepared as not to seem improbable.

I am sorry that you lost your cause of Intromission, because I yet think the arguments on your side unanswerable. But you seem, I think, to say that you gained reputation even by your defeat; and reputation you will daily gain, if you keep Lord Auchinleck's precept in your mind, and endeavour to consolidate in your mind a firm and regular system of law, instead of picking up occasional fragments.

My health seems in general to improve; but I have been troubled for many weeks with a vexatious catarrh, which is sometimes sufficiently distressful. I have not found any great effects from bleeding and physic, and am afraid that I must expect help from brighter days and softer air.

Write to me now and then; and when any good befalls you, make haste and let me know it, for no one will rejoice at it more than, dear Sir, your most humble servant.

SAM. JOHNSON.

You continue to stand very high in the favour of Mrs. Thrale

Letter 56. Samuel Johnson to James Macpherson

The following, with Letters 57 and 70, gives echoes of one of the greatest literary storms of the eighteenth century, the controversy on the poems of Ossian. This will be referred to more fully later on, in connection with David Hume. Macpherson's *Fingal* was issued in London, 1762. After his journey to the Hebrides, Johnson stoutly denied the existence of any Gaelic originals such as Macpherson alleged for his poem. Macpherson sent Johnson a challenge. In reply, Johnson sent the following note, and bought a stout oak stick.

Mr. James Macpherson,—

I received your foolish and impudent letter. Any violence offered me I shall do my best to repel; and what I cannot do for myself, the law shall do for me. I hope I shall not be deterred from detecting what I think a cheat by the menaces of a ruffian.

What would you have me retract? I thought your book an imposture; I think it an imposture still. For this opinion I have given my reasons to the public, which I here dare you to refute. Your rage I defy. Your abilities, since your Homer, are not so formidable: and what I hear of your morals inclines me to pay regard not to what you shall say, but to what you shall prove. You may print this if you will.

Sam. Johnson.

Letter 57. Samuel Johnson to James Boswell

February 7, 1775.

My Dear Boswell,—

I am surprised that, knowing as you do the disposition of your countrymen to tell lies in favour of each other, you can be at all affected by any reports that circulate among them. Macpherson never in his life offered me a sight of any original, or of any evidence of any kind; but thought only of intimidating me by noise and threats, till my last answer,—that I would not be deterred from detecting what I thought a cheat, by the menaces of a ruffian—put an end to our correspondence.

The state of the question is this. He, and Dr. Blair, whom I consider as deceived, say, that he copied the poem from old manuscripts. His copies, if he had them, and I believe him to have none, are nothing. Where are the manuscripts? They can be shown if they exist, but they were never shown. *De non existentibus et non apparentibus*, says our law, *eadem est ratio*. No man has a claim to credit upon his own word, when better evidence, if he had it, may be easily produced. But, so far as we can find, the Erse language was never written till very lately for the purposes of religion. A nation that cannot write, or a language that was never written, has no manuscripts.

But whatever he has he never offered to show. If old manuscripts should now be mentioned, I should, unless there were more evidence than can be easily had, suppose them another proof of Scotch conspiracy in national falsehood. Do not censure the expression; you know it to be true. . . .

My compliments to Madam and Veronica. I am, Sir, your most humble servant.

SAM. JOHNSON.

LETTER 58. SAMUEL JOHNSON TO JAMES BOSWELL

April 8, 1780.

DEAR SIR.—

Well, I had resolved to send you the Chesterfield letter; but I will write once again without it. Never impose tasks upon mortals. To require two things is the way to have them both undone.

For the difficulties which you mention in your affairs, I am sorry; but difficulty is now very general; it is not therefore less grievous, for there is less hope of help. I pretend not to give you advice, not knowing the state of your affairs; and general counsels about prudence and frugality would do you little good. You are, however, in the right not to increase your own perplexity by a journey hither; and I hope that by staying at home you will please your father.

Poor dear Beauclerk—*nec, ut soles, dabis joca*, His wit and his folly, his acuteness and maliciousness, his merriment and reasoning, are now over. Such another will not often be found among mankind. He directed himself to be buried by the side of his mother, an instance of tenderness which I hardly expected. He has left his children to the care of Lady Di, and if she dies, of Mr. Langton, and of Mr. Leicester, his relation, and a man of good character. His library has been offered to sale to the Russian ambassador.

Dr. Percy, notwithstanding all the noise of the

newspapers, has had no literary loss. Clothes and movables were burnt to the value of about £100; but his papers, and I think his books, were all preserved.

Poor Mr. Thrale has been in extreme danger from an apoplectical disorder, and recovered, beyond the expectation of his physicians; he is now at Bath, that his mind may be quiet, and Mrs. Thrale and Miss are with him.

Having told you what has happened to your friends, let me say something to you of yourself. You are always complaining of melancholy, and I conclude from those complaints that you are fond of it. No man talks of that which he is desirous to conceal, and every man desires to conceal that of which he is ashamed. Do not pretend to deny it; *manifestum habemus furem*; make it an invariable and obligatory law to yourself, never to mention your own mental diseases; if you are never to speak of them you will think on them but little, and if you think little of them, they will molest you rarely. When you talk of them, it is plain that you want either praise or pity; for praise there is no room, and pity will do you no good; therefore, from this hour speak no more, think no more, about them.

Your transaction with Mrs. Stewart gave me great satisfaction; I am much obliged to you for your attention. Do not lose sight of her; your countenance may be of great credit, and of consequence of great advantage to her. The memory of her brother is yet fresh in my mind; he was an ingenious and worthy man.

Please to make my compliments to your lady and to the young ladies. I should like to see

them, pretty loves. I am, dear Sir, yours affectionately,

SAM. JOHNSON.

LETTER 59. SAMUEL JOHNSON TO JAMES BOSWELL

March 14, 1781.

DEAR SIR,

I hoped you had got rid of all this hypocrisy of misery. What have you to do with liberty and necessity? Or what more than to hold your tongue about it? Do not doubt but I shall be most heartily glad to see you here again, for I love every part about you but your affectation of distress.

I have at last finished my Lives, and have laid up for you a load of copy, all out of order, so that it will amuse you a long time to set it right. Come to me, my dear Bozzy, and let us be as happy as we can. We will go again to the Mitre, and talk old times over.

I am, dear Sir, yours affectionately,

SAM. JOHNSON.

LETTER 60. SAMUEL JOHNSON TO THE EARL OF CHESTERFIELD

This is probably the most famous letter in literature. At the suggestion of Dodsley, the bookseller, Johnson sent to Chesterfield in 1747 the prospectus of his *Dictionary*. Chesterfield, at that time Secretary of State, was the target of many a fine literary appeal, and contented himself with sending Johnson £10. The story of Johnson's being kept waiting in the great man's ante-chamber, while Colley Cibber was admitted without delay, was denied by Johnson himself. At the same time, the patronage of a great lord should have meant more than £10 to genius in need, and when, at the

conclusion of the heavy task, Chesterfield made friendly overtures, Johnson nipped them in the bud with this letter. It is pleasant to know that Lord Chesterfield bore no malice to the writer. He even showed the letter to Dodsley, pointing out the severest phrases. Probably his knowledge of human nature told him this was the only way to counter such a masterly rebuff.

February, 1755.

My Lord,—

I have been lately informed by the proprietor of the *World*, that two papers, in which my Dictionary is recommended to the publick, were written by your Lordship. To be so distinguished, is an honour, which, being very little accustomed to favours from the great, I know not well how to receive, or in what terms to acknowledge.

When, upon some slight encouragement, I first visited your Lordship, I was overpowered, like the rest of mankind, by the enchantment of your address; and could not forbear to wish that I might boast myself *Le vainqueur du vainqueur de la terre*—that I might obtain that regard for which I saw the world contending; but I found my attendance so little encouraged, that neither pride nor modesty would suffer me to continue it. When I had once addressed your Lordship in publick, I had exhausted all the art of pleasing which a retired and uncourtly scholar can possess. I had done all that I could; and no man is well pleased to have his all neglected, be it ever so little.

Seven years, my Lord, have now past, since I waited in your outward rooms, or was repulsed from your door; during which time I have been pushing on my work through difficulties, of which it is useless to complain, and have brought it at

last to the verge of publication, without one act of assistance, one word of encouragement, or one smile of favour. Such treatment I did not expect, for I never had a Patron before. The shepherd in Virgil grew at last acquainted with Love, and found him a native of the rocks.

Is not a Patron, my Lord, one who looks with unconcern on a man struggling for life in the water, and, when he has reached ground, encumbers him with help? The notice which you have been pleased to take of my labours, had it been early, had been kind; but it has been delayed till I am indifferent, and cannot enjoy it; till I am solitary, and cannot impart it; till I am known, and do not want it. I hope it is no very cynical asperity not to confess obligations where no benefit has been received, or to be unwilling that the publick should consider me as owing that to a Patron, which Providence has enabled me to do for myself.

Having carried on my work thus far with so little obligation to any favourer of learning, I shall not be disappointed though I should conclude it, if less be possible, with less; for I have been long wakened from that dream of hope, in which I once boasted myself with so much exultation,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's most humble,
most obedient servant,

Sam. Johnson.

Letter 61. Samuel Johnson to Samuel Richardson

Richardson was one of the very few contributors who assisted Johnson in the *Rambler* (1750-52). Johnson had a high opinion of his friend's work, describing him as having "taught the passions to move at the command of virtue". In 1756 Johnson, arrested for debt, was bailed out by Richardson, an act of which the worthy printer was justly proud.

March 9, 1750-1.

Dear Sir,—

Though Clarissa wants no help from external splendour, I was glad to see her improved in her appearance, but more glad to find that she was now got above all fears of prolixity, and confident enough of success to supply whatever had been hitherto suppressed. I never indeed found a hint of any such defalcation, but I regretted it; for though the story is long, every letter is short.

I wish you would add an *index rerum*, that when the reader recollects any incident, he may easily find it, which at present he cannot do, unless he knows in which volume it is told; for Clarissa is not a performance to be read with eagerness, and laid aside for ever; but will be occasionally consulted by the busy, the aged, and the studious; and therefore I beg that this edition, by which I suppose posterity is to abide, may want nothing that can facilitate its use.

I am, Sir, yours, &c.,

Sam. Johnson.

Letter 62. Samuel Johnson to Mrs. Thrale

In 1765 Johnson made the acquaintance of the Thrales, a wealthy family with which he was henceforth to be closely associated. Mr. Thrale was "one of the most eminent brewers in England", and came to enjoy Johnson's genuine respect. He was some sixteen years older than his wife, a Welsh lady whose maiden name was Hester Salusbury. Apparently the marriage had been one of convenience, and the wife sought in literature a solace for the want of her husband's affection. In figure she was short, plump, and brisk; in mind she was a "lively, feather-headed lady, with a good deal of natural wit and a perfect confidence in the exercise of it". She had in addition sufficient general culture to appreciate Johnson and to play a fair part in conversation. Calling one day on Johnson and finding him in a mood of deep melancholy, the Thrales begged him to come to their country house at Streatham. For sixteen years a room was kept always ready for him, either here or at their town house in Southwark. This resort secured to Johnson most of the comfort of his closing years. Mrs. Thrale was at this time about twenty-four, while Johnson was fifty-five. His attitude toward her was a mixture of the father and the admirer. "My mistress" was his playful title for her. He addressed to her little poems, and gave her good advice. Her flattering ways won confidences from him, and he told her much of his physical and mental sufferings. But he took the measure of both fairly. Speaking of husband and wife, he said: "It is a great mistake to suppose that she is above him in literary attainments. She is more flippant; but he has ten times her learning: he is a regular scholar; but her learning is that of a schoolboy in one of the lower forms". Boswell and Mrs. Thrale, in spite of Johnson's kindly efforts, had no liking for each other. After Johnson's death, and before the appearance of Boswell's *Life*, Mrs. Thrale published her *Anecdotes of the late Samuel Johnson, LL.D., during the last twenty years of his life*, of which the whole of the first edition was sold on the day of issue.

[Lichfield], *Oct.* 27, 1781.

Dearest Dear Lady,—

Your Oxford letter followed me hither, with Lichfield put upon the direction in the place

of Oxford, and was received at the same time as the letter written next after it. All is therefore well.

Queeney is a naughty captious girl, that will not write because I did not remember to ask her. Pray tell her that I ask her now, and that I depend upon her for the history of her own time.

Poor Lucy's illness has left her very deaf, and, I think, very inarticulate. I can scarcely make her understand me, and she can hardly make me understand her. So here are merry doings. But she seems to like me better than she did. She eats very little, but does not fall away.

Mrs. Cobb and Peter Garrick are as you left them. Garrick's legatees at this place are very angry that they receive nothing. Things are not quite right, though we are so far from London.

Mrs. Aston is just as I left her. She walks no worse; but I am afraid speaks less distinctly as to her utterance. Her mind is untouched. She eats too little, and wears away. The extenuation is her only bad symptom. She was glad to see me.

That naughty girl Queeney, now she is in my head again, how could she think that I did not wish to hear from her, a dear sweet.—But he must suffer who can love.

All here is gloomy; a faint struggle with the tediousness of time; a doleful confession of present misery, and the approach seen and felt of what is most dreaded and most shunned. But such is the lot of man.

I am, dearest Madam,

Your, &c.,

SAM. JOHNSON.

Letter 63. Samuel Johnson to Mrs. Piozzi.

In April, 1781, Mr. Thrale died, having appointed Johnson one of his executors, and left him a legacy of £200. For a time Johnson was full of importance over his new office of directing the fortunes of a brewery containing the "potentiality of growing rich beyond the dreams of avarice". But the business was shortly sold for £135,000. In June, 1784, Mrs. Thrale (now aged forty-four) was married at Bath to Signor Piozzi, an Italian music master. Johnson was greatly shocked, and tried his utmost to prevent the union. In vain. "Poor Thrale," he wrote, "I thought that either her virtue or her vice would have restrained her from such a marriage."

[*July*, 1784].

Madam,—

If I interpret your letter right, you are ignominiously married: if it is yet undone, let us *once* more *talk* together. If you have abandoned your children and your religion, God forgive your wickedness; if you have forfeited your fame and your country, may your folly do no further mischief. If the last act is yet to do, I who have loved you, esteemed you, reverenced you, and *served you*, I who long thought you the first of womankind, entreat that, before your fate is irrevocable, I may once more see you. I was, I once was, Madam, most truly yours,

Sam. Johnson.

I will come down, if you will permit it.[1]

[1] Mrs. Piozzi sent Johnson the following reply:—"[Bath], *July* 4, 1784. Sir,—I have this morning received from you so rough a letter in reply to one which was both tenderly and respectfully written, that I am forced to desire the conclusion of a correspondence which I can bear to continue no longer. The birth of my second husband is not meaner than that of my first; his sentiments are not meaner; his profession is not meaner, and his superiority in what he professes acknowledged by all mankind. It is want of fortune, then, that is ignominious; the character of the man I have chosen has no other claim to such an epithet. The religion to which he has been always a zealous adherent will, I hope, teach him to forgive insults he has not deserved; mine will, I hope, enable me to bear them at once

Letter 64. Samuel Johnson to Mrs. Piozzi.

In spite of her friends' cavils and Johnson's dismal forebodings, Mrs. Piozzi's marriage proved thoroughly happy. Piozzi was good-hearted and genteel. He settled in England, and soon reconciled her family and friends to himself. His wife outlived him by twelve years, dying at the age of eighty-one. Johnson evidently felt that in his previous burst of indignation he had gone too far, and in the following letter he tries to make some amends. Mrs. Piozzi informs us that she replied affectionately. Her letter, however, is missing; and the friendship was not resumed. During the few remaining months of Johnson's life, the Piozzis lived abroad.

London, *July* 8, 1784.

Dear Madam,—

What you have done, however I may lament it, I have no pretence to resent, as it has not been injurious to me. I therefore breathe out one sigh more of tenderness, perhaps useless, but at least sincere. I wish that God may grant you every blessing, that you may be happy in this world for its short continuance, and eternally happy in a better state; and whatever I can contribute to your happiness I am very ready to repay, for that kindness which soothed twenty years of a life radically wretched.

Do not think slightly of the advice which I now presume to offer. Prevail upon Mr. Piozzi to settle

with dignity and patience. To hear that I have forfeited my fame is indeed the greatest insult I ever yet received. My fame is as unsullied as snow, or I should think it unworthy of him who must henceforth protect it. I write by the coach the more speedily and effectually to prevent your coming hither. Perhaps by my fame (and I hope it is so) you mean only that celebrity which is a consideration of a much lower kind. I care for that only as it may give pleasure to my husband and his friends. Farewell, dear Sir, and accept my best wishes. You have always commanded my esteem, and long enjoyed the fruits of a friendship, *never infringed by one harsh expression on my part during twenty years of familiar talk. Never did I oppose your will, nor can your unmerited severity itself lessen my regard*; but till you have changed your opinion of Mr. Piozzi, let us converse no more. God bless you."

in England: you may live here with more dignity than in Italy, and with more security; your rank will be higher, and your fortune more under your own eye. I desire not to detail all my reasons, but every argument of prudence and interest is for England, and only some phantoms of imagination seduce you to Italy. I am afraid, however, that my counsel is vain, yet I have eased my heart by giving it.

When Queen Mary took the resolution of sheltering herself in England, the Archbishop of St. Andrews, attempting to dissuade her, attended on her journey; and when they came to the irremeable stream that separated the two Kingdoms, walked by her side into the water, in the middle of which he seized her bridle, and with earnestness proportioned to her danger and his own affection pressed her to return. The Queen went forward.—If the parallel reaches thus far, may it go no farther.—The tears stand in my eyes.

I am going into Derbyshire, and hope to be followed by your good wishes,

For I am, with great affection,

Your &c.,

SAM. JOHNSON.

LETTER 65. SAMUEL JOHNSON TO HIS MOTHER

In January, 1759, Johnson's mother died at the age of ninety. Johnson was tenderly attached to her, and deeply regretted that he could not be with her in her last illness. Among the most touching letters in our language are the three he wrote her at this time, of which the following is the last. They were enclosed in letters to his step-daughter, Lucy Porter, who lived with her. Johnson was at this time writing

the *Idler* essays, which appeared every Saturday, and his literary work tied him to London. But, though he could not get to Lichfield, he sent generous contributions. To provide for the funeral expenses, he composed *Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia*, writing it in the evenings of one week, and sending to the press each portion as it was written. The booksellers paid him £100, with a further £25 on the appearance of a second edition.

Jan. 20, 1759.

DEAR HONOURED MOTHER,—

Neither your condition nor your character make it fit for me to say much. You have been the best mother, and I believe the best woman in the world. I thank you for your indulgence to me, and beg forgiveness of all that I have done ill, and all that I have omitted to do well. God grant you His Holy Spirit, and receive you to everlasting happiness, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen. Lord Jesus receive your spirit. Amen.

I am, dear, dear mother,

Your dutiful son,

SAM. JOHNSON.

LETTER 66. SAMUEL JOHNSON TO JANE LANGTON

Among Johnson's youthful friends was Bennet Langton, an Oxford man, scholarly, genial, of good family, in figure so tall and slender as to be compared to the stork in Raphael's cartoon "The Miraculous Draught of Fishes". Johnson's nickname for him was Lanky. After Langton's marriage in 1770, his wife and children came in for a share of the philosopher's lively affection. One of the daughters was Johnson's godchild, and to her, in her seventh year, the following letter was penned "in a large round hand, nearly resembling printed characters". Nothing could better reveal the gentle heart hidden under the uncouth exterior of the man whom Gray once called "the Great Bear". For some days before the letter was written he had been suffering acutely from dropsy.

May 10, 1784.

My Dearest Miss Jenny,—

I am sorry that your pretty letter has been so long without being answered; but, when I am not pretty well, I do not always write plain enough for young ladies. I am glad, my dear, to see that you write so well, and hope that you mind your pen, your book, and your needle, for they are all necessary. Your books will give you knowledge, and make you respected; and your needle will find you useful employment when you do not care to read. When you are a little older, I hope you will be very diligent in learning arithmetic; and, above all, that through your whole life you will carefully say your prayers, and read your Bible.

I am, my dear, your most humble servant,

Sam. Johnson.

JAMES BOSWELL

1740–1795

After studying law at the universities of Glasgow and Edinburgh, Boswell was sent to Utrecht. Passing through London on his way, May, 1763, he had his long-desired introduction to Johnson in the shop of Davies, the bookseller. From their first interview he made careful notes of their conversations, Johnson himself encouraging the keeping of a full journal. Boswell would have liked to remain in London; but his father, Lord Auchinleck, threatened to disinherit him unless he went on with his studies. He crossed to the Continent, where he met Hume, who describes him as "very good-humoured, very agreeable, and very mad". In 1765 Boswell visited Corsica, and published his *Account* of the island in 1768, coming to London the same year to enjoy his literary fame and Johnson's society. After many amatory adventures,

Boswell married his cousin, Margaret Montgomerie, a sensible and amiable woman (Nov., 1769). A long blank ensued in his correspondence with Johnson, and they had no meeting until March, 1772. In the following year Boswell was elected a member of the famous Literary Club.

Letter 67. James Boswell to Samuel Johnson

Though Boswell plumed himself upon his association with "Dictionary Johnson", his enthusiasm was not shared by his relatives. His wife, like his father, could not appreciate his romantic devotion. His father called it "pinning himself to the tail of an auld Dominie". Happily for the world, Boswell, in spite of his weakness and shallowness, had too large a sympathy and too quick a sense of literary proportion to falter in his allegiance. "Wonderful as it is", says Craik, "that a man so compact of folly and vanity, so childish and so weak as Boswell, should have produced a book which has enforced the admiration of the world, yet we need not explain that book as a literary miracle. Its success is achieved by the usual means—insight, sympathy, skill, and perseverance."

Sunday, *September* 30, 1764.

My ever dear and much-respected Sir,—

You know my solemn enthusiasm of mind. You love me for it, and I respect myself for it, because in so far I resemble Mr. Johnson. You will be agreeably surprised, when you learn the reason of my writing this letter. I am at Wittemberg in Saxony. I am in the old church where the Reformation was first preached, and where some of the Reformers lie interred. I cannot resist the serious pleasure of writing to Mr. Johnson from the tomb of Melancthon. My paper rests upon the grave-stone of that great and good man, who was undoubtedly the worthiest of all the reformers. He wished to reform abuses which had

been introduced into the Church; but had no private resentment to gratify. So mild was he, that when his aged mother consulted him with anxiety on the perplexing disputes of the times, he advised her "to keep to the old religion". At this tomb, then, my ever dear and respected friend! I vow to thee an eternal attachment. It shall be my study to do what I can to render your life happy: and if you die before me, I shall endeavour to do honour to your memory; and, elevated by the remembrance of you, persist in noble piety. May God, the father of all beings, ever bless you! and may you continue to love your most affectionate friend, and devoted servant, James Boswell.

HENRY FIELDING

1707-1754

Fielding, whose father was an army officer, afterwards General Fielding, was contemporary with Pitt and Fox at Eton. After studying law at Leyden, he lived an irregular life in London, supporting himself by writing plays, in which he imitated Congreve. His *Tom Thumb* (1730) was a clever burlesque of the popular playwrights of his day, and won the admiration of Swift, stirring even him to audible laughter. After his marriage with Charlotte Cradock, Fielding turned seriously to the law and was called to the Bar in 1740. In this year the popularity of *Pamela*, which amused him by its sentimentalism, led him to attempt a parody which—amazing fate for an essay in caricature!—developed into *Joseph Andrews*. His last novel, *Amelia*, in the heroine of which he gave a portrait of his wife Charlotte, is said to have brought him £1000. Dr. Johnson read this through without stopping, yet described Fielding as a "barren rascal".

Letter 68. Henry Fielding to the Hon. George Lyttelton

It was by the influence of his old schoolfellow, the Hon. George Lyttelton (afterwards Baron Lyttelton), that Fielding was appointed Justice of the Peace for Middlesex, sitting at the court in Bow Street. In recognition of this kindness, he dedicated his novel *Tom Jones* to this patron. When Mr. Lyttelton followed Fielding in taking a second wife, the novelist, who was always warm-hearted in friendship, wrote the subjoined letter. In 1753 Fielding fully justified his appointment to the magistracy by his skill and energy in breaking up gangs of robbers in London. George Lyttelton (1709–1773) was in youth a friend of Pope, and was prominent in the opposition to Walpole. He became Lord of the Treasury in the Broad Bottom Administration (1744). His reputation was that of a man of integrity, amiable and benevolent; but Chesterfield holds him up as a warning to his son because of his "distinguished inattention and awkwardness".

Bow Street, *August* 29, 1749.

Sir,—

Permit me to bring up the rear of your friends in paying my compliments of congratulation on your late happy nuptials. There may, perhaps, be seasons when the rear may be as honourable a post in friendship as in war; and if so, such certainly must be every time of joy and felicity. Your present situation must be full of bliss; and so will be, I am confident, your future life from the same fountain. Nothing can equal the excellent character your lady bears amongst those of her own sex, and I never yet knew them speak well of a woman who did not deserve their good words. How admirable is your fortune in the matrimonial lottery! I will venture to say there is no man alive who exults more in this, or in any other happiness that can attend you, than myself, and you ought to believe me from the

same reason that fully persuades me of the satisfaction you receive from any happiness of mine; this reason is that you must be sensible how much of it I owe to your goodness; and there is a great pleasure in gratitude, though I believe it second to that of benevolence; for of all the delights upon earth, none can equal the raptures which a good mind feels in conferring happiness on those whom we think worthy of it. This is the sweetest ingredient in power, and I solemnly protest I never wished for power more than a few days ago, for the sake of a man whom I love, the more, perhaps, from the esteem I know he bears you than any other reason. This man is in love with a young creature of the most apparent worth who returns his affections. Nothing is wanting to make two very miserable people extremely blest, but a moderate portion of the greatest of human evils, so philosophers call it, and so it is called by divines, whose word is the rather to be taken as they are many of them more conversant with this evil than even the philosophers were. The name of this man is Moore, to whom you kindly destined the laurel, which, though it hath long been withered, may not probably soon drop from the brow of its present possessor. But there is another place of much the same value now vacant: it is that of deputy licenser to the stage. Be not offended at this hint; for though I will own it impudent enough in one who hath so many obligations of his own to you to venture to recommend another man to your favour, yet impudence itself may possibly be a virtue when exerted on behalf of a friend: at least I am the less ashamed of it, as I have known men remarkable for the

opposite modesty, possess it without the mixture of any other quality. In this fault, then, you must indulge me; for should I ever see you as high in power as I wish, and as it is perhaps more my interest than your own that you should be, I shall be guilty of the like as often as I find a man in whom I can, after much intimacy, discover no want but that of the evil above mentioned. I beg you will do me the honour of making my compliments to your unknown lady, and believe me to be, with the highest esteem, respect, and gratitude, Sir, your most obliged, most obedient, humble servant,

HENRY FIELDING.

LAURENCE STERNE

1713–1768

Sterne was born at Clonmel, and was the son of an ensign in a foot regiment. The first ten years of his life were spent in following the regiment; hence the deep interest to him of soldiers and barrack life, depicted in his portraits of Uncle Toby and Corporal Trim. At the age of twenty he entered Jesus College, Cambridge, as a sizar. In 1738 he was presented with the living of Sutton-in-the-Forest, Yorkshire, and became Prebendary of York. Here he spent twenty uneventful years in comfortable circumstances as a country parson, his relaxations being "books, painting, and fiddling". It was in 1759 that he issued the first two volumes of *Tristram Shandy*, which produced an immediate sensation and made him the lion of London society. His letters, published by his daughter, tell the story of the remaining eight years of his life. The failure of his health drove him to France and Italy. In 1767 appeared the ninth and last volume of *Tristram Shandy*, and in 1768, three weeks before his death, the *Sentimental Journey*.

Letter 69. Laurence Sterne to David Garrick

The prose of Sterne is quite peculiar to himself. It suggests the rattle of conversation, where two or three people are adding their successive contributions to a discussion or narrative without regard for grammatical connection. The surprising thing about it is that, while it is so utterly colloquial, so jerky and unexpected in its movement, it is always intelligible. "Chaotic as it is in the syntactical sense, it is a perfectly clear vehicle for the conveyance of thought. "No one", remarks Mr. Paul, "could say more, and not many could say so much in a few words."

Bath, *April* 6, 1765.

I scalp you! my dear Garrick!—my dear friend! foul befal the man who hurts a hair of your head!—and so full was I of that very sentiment, that my letter had not been put into the post-office ten minutes, before my heart smote me; and I sent to recall it—but failed. You are sadly to blame, Shandy! for this, quoth I, leaning with my head on my hand, as I recriminated upon my false delicacy in the affair. Garrick's nerves, (if he has any left,) are as fine and delicately spun as thy own—his sentiments as honest and friendly; thou knowest, Shandy, that he loves thee—why wilt thou hazard him a moment's pain? Puppy! fool! coxcomb! jackass! etc. etc.; and so I balanced the account to your favour, before I received it drawn up in your way. I say your way—for it is not stated so much to your honour and credit, as I had passed the account before; for it was a most lamented truth, that I never received one of the letters your friendship meant me, except whilst in Paris. O! how I congratulate you for the anxiety the world has, and con-

tinues to be under, for your return. Return—return to the few who love you, and the thousands who admire you. The moment you set your foot upon your stage—mark! I tell it you, by some magic, irresisted power, every fibre about your heart will vibrate afresh, and as strong and feelingly as ever. Nature, with Glory at her back, will light up the torch within you; and there is enough of it left, to heat and enlighten the world these many, many, many years.

Heaven be praised! (I utter it from my soul) that your lady and Minerva, is in a condition to walk to Windsor—full rapturously will I lead the graceful pilgrim to the temple, where I will sacrifice with the purest incense to her; but you may worship with me, or not, 'twill make no difference either in the truth or warmth of my devotion: still, (after all I have seen) I still maintain her peerless.

Powell—good heaven! give me some one with less smoke and more fire. There are those, who, like the Pharisees, still think they shall be heard for *much* speaking. Come—come away, my dear Garrick, and teach us another lesson.

Adieu!—I love you dearly—and your lady better—not hobihorsically—but most sentimentally and affectionately—for I am yours, (that is, if you never say another word about ——) with all the sentiments of love and friendship you deserve from me.

DAVID HUME

1711–1776

Hume was a native of Edinburgh and a student of law in its university. After his college career, he spent three years in literary studies in France. The *Treatise on Human Nature*, his most striking achievement, appeared in 1739. His contemporary fame rested mainly on his elaborate *History of Great Britain*, which was published between the years 1754 and 1762. He attained to some political eminence, being made Under Secretary of State in 1767. Hume exercised a profound influence on the course of European philosophy, Kant especially acknowledging that Hume "roused him from his dogmatic slumber". As a thinker, Hume was the most original man of his day

Letter 70. David Hume to ——

Hume's letter to an unknown correspondent deals with the burning literary controversy which raged round the names of Macpherson and Ossian. James Macpherson (1736–1796) was born in Inverness and educated at Aberdeen University. While tutor to Graham of Balgowan, he met John Home, author of *Douglas*, to whom he showed Gaelic verses which he said he had collected. He published at Edinburgh (1760) *Fragments of Ancient Poetry collected in the Highlands*, and asserted the existence of a Gaelic epic. With the support of Dr. Hugh Blair he secured funds, and in the autumn of the same year set out on his voyage of discovery, "a young man of twenty-three, with an imperfect knowledge of Gaelic and a perfect confidence in himself. Letters of introduction ensured him help and hospitality in distant glens and islands, with lairds and ministers from Perthshire to far-off Benbecula, where unadulterated tradition and undefiled Gaelic were likeliest to be found. Chiefs in their houses showed him dusty manuscripts hard to decipher; ministers helped him to translate Gaelic, in which he was very deficient; venerable blacksmiths, sons of bards, recited long screeds of Fingalian verse in high, nasal accents, with the prospective reward of a gill of whisky or a roll of tobacco" (Graham, *Scottish Men of Letters*). After a four-months' tour he returned to Edinburgh, announcing to Dr. Blair that the Celtic Homer had come to light. He now set his face toward London; and Hume wrote

on his behalf to Strahan, the printer, calling him "a sensible, modest young fellow, a very good scholar, and of unexceptionable morals". Lord Bute, the court favourite, gave his patronage; and in December, 1761, appeared *Fingal, an ancient Epic Poem in six books by Ossian, the son of Fingal.* The new poetry met with a "universal deluge of approbation". In Scotland there was scarcely a doubter. Two years later appeared a second epic, *Temora*, in eight books. Scepticism at once reared its head. Two long epics as the outcome of four months' travel in the Highlands! But Macpherson became merely aggressive and vainglorious. Hume's opinion changed. In September, 1763, he wrote to Blair that men of letters in London held the poems to be "palpable and impudent forgery". The main onslaught came from Dr. Johnson. In 1775 he published his *Journey to the Western Islands*, in which he denied the existence of any originals. "Macpherson", he said, "had found names and stories and phrases, nay passages in old songs, and with them blended his own compositions". Macpherson wrote in reply that "his age and infirmities alone protected him from the treatment due to an infamous liar and traducer". Johnson bought an oak cudgel six feet long with a knob three inches in diameter; but no assault was made. In 1785 a Highland gentleman gave £1000 for the printing of the original Gaelic MSS. But, though Macpherson had told of trunks full in his attics, no version was ever published. When after his death the chests were searched, no such documents were to be found. The Highland Society's report on the whole matter, published in 1805, stated that no poem the same in title or tenor with the epics was discoverable.

EDINBURGH, *August* 16, 1760.

SIR,—

I am surprised to find by your letter, that Mr. Gray should have entertained suspicions with regard to the authenticity of these fragments of our Highland poetry. The first time I was shown the copies of some of them in manuscript, by our friend John Home, I was inclined to be a little incredulous on that head; but Mr. Home removed my scruples, by informing me of the manner in which he procured them from Mr. Macpherson, the translator.

These two gentlemen were drinking the waters together at Moffat last autumn, when their conversation fell upon Highland poetry, which Mr. Macpherson extolled very highly. Our friend, who knew him to be a good scholar, and a man of taste, found his curiosity excited, and asked whether he had ever translated any of them. Mr. Macpherson replied, that he never had attempted any such thing, and doubted whether it was possible to transfuse such beauties into our language; but, for Mr. Home's satisfaction, and in order to give him a general notion of the strain of that wild poetry, he would endeavour to turn one of them into English. He accordingly brought him one next day, which our friend was so much pleased with, that he never ceased soliciting Mr. Macpherson, till he insensibly produced that small volume which has been published.

After this volume was in everybody's hands, and universally admired, we heard every day new reasons, which put the authenticity, not the great antiquity which the translator ascribes to them, beyond all question, for their antiquity is a point which must be ascertained by reasoning; though the arguments he employs seem very probable and convincing. But certain it is, that these poems are in everybody's mouth in the Highlands, have been handed down from father to son, and are of an age beyond all memory and tradition.

In the family of every Highland chieftain, there was anciently retained a bard, whose office was the same with that of the Greek rhapsodists; and the general subject of the poems which they recited was the wars of Fingal; an epoch no less remarkable among them, than the wars of Troy among

the Greek poets. This custom is not even yet altogether abolished: the bard and piper are esteemed the most honourable offices in a chieftain's family, and these two characters are frequently united in the same person. Adam Smith, the celebrated Professor in Glasgow, told me that the piper of the Argyllshire Militia repeated to him all those poems which Mr. Macpherson has translated, and many more of equal beauty. Major Mackay, Lord Reay's brother, also told me that he remembers them perfectly; as likewise did the Laird of Macfarlane, the greatest antiquarian whom we have in this country, and who insists so strongly on the historical truth, as well as on the poetical beauty of these productions. I could add the Laird and Lady Macleod to these authorities, with many more, if these were not sufficient, as they live in different parts of the Highlands, very remote from each other, and they could only be acquainted with poems that had become in a manner national works, and had gradually spread themselves into every mouth, and imprinted themselves on every memory. Every body in Edinburgh is so convinced of this truth, that we have endeavoured to put Mr. Macpherson on a way of procuring us more of these wild flowers. He is a modest, sensible young man, not settled in any living, but employed as a private tutor in Mr. Graham of Balgowan's family, a way of life which he is not fond of. We have, therefore, set about a subscription of a guinea or two guineas a-piece, in order to enable him to quit that family, and undertake a mission into the Highlands, where he hopes to recover more of these fragments.

There is, in particular, a country surgeon some-

where in Lochabar, who, he says, can recite a great number of them, but never committed them to writing; as indeed the orthography of the Highland language is not fixed, and the natives have always employed more the sword than the pen. This surgeon has by heart the Epic poem mentioned by Mr. Macpherson in his Preface; and as he is somewhat old, and is the only person living that has it entire, we are in the more haste to recover a monument, which will certainly be regarded as a curiosity in the republic of letters.

I own that my first and chief objection to the authenticity of these fragments was not on account of the noble and even tender strokes which they contain; for these are the offspring of genius and passion in all countries; I was only surprised at the regular plan which appears in some of these pieces, and which seems to be the work of a more cultivated age. None of the specimens of barbarous poetry known to us, the Hebrew, Arabian, or any other, contain this species of beauty; and if a regular epic poem, or even any thing of that kind, nearly regular, should also come from that rough climate or uncivilized people, it would appear to me a phenomenon altogether unaccountable.

I remember Mr. Macpherson told me, that the heroes of this Highland epic were not only, like Homer's heroes, their own butchers, bakers, and cooks, but also their own shoe-makers, carpenters, and smiths. He mentioned an incident which put this matter in a remarkable light. A warrior had the head of his spear struck off in battle; upon which he immediately retires behind the army, where a large forge was erected, makes a new one, hurries back to the action, pierces his enemy

while the iron, which was yet red-hot, hisses in the wound. This imagery you will allow to be singular, and so well imagined that it would have been adopted by Homer had the manners of the Greeks allowed him to have employed it.

I forgot to mention, as another proof of the authenticity of these poems, and even of the reality of the adventures contained in them, that the names of the heroes, Fingal, Oscar, Osur, Oscan, Dermid, are still given in the Highlands to large mastiffs, in the same manner as we affix to them the names of Cæsar, Pompey, Hector, or the French that of Marlborough. It gives me pleasure to find that a person of so fine a taste as Mr. Gray approves of these fragments; as it may convince us that our fondness of them is not altogether founded on national prepossessions, which, however, you know to be a little strong. The translation is elegant, but I made an objection to the author, which I wish you would communicate to Mr. Gray, that we may judge of the justness of it. There appeared to me many verses in his prose, and all of them in the same measure with Mr. Shenstone's famous ballad,—

> Ye shepherds, so cheerful and gay,
> Whose flocks never carelessly roam, etc.

Pray, ask Mr. Gray whether he made the same remark, etc., and whether he thinks it a blemish.

Yours most sincerely, etc.

THOMAS GRAY

1716–1771

Gray was a Londoner (born in Cornhill) who tried to content himself with the life of a don. At Eton he formed with Horace Walpole, West, and Ashton the famous "Quadruple Alliance", a literary combination which came to enjoy great influence. At Cambridge he was the close companion of Walpole, with whom, at the end of their university course, he travelled for two years in France and Italy. They quarrelled, and Gray returned to Cambridge, where he acquired fame as a man of learning. In London he spent much time poring over the treasures of the recently founded British Museum. He was an ardent admirer of the scenery of Wales and the Lake District, which he described in his letters, showing a delight in wild nature and mountain landscape till then almost unknown to English literature. In this respect "he was Wordsworthian before Wordsworth was born". In 1751 was published the *Elegy*, and in 1757, on the death of Colley Cibber, the laureateship was offered to him, but was declined.

Letter 71. Thomas Gray to Horace Walpole

Gray's total amount of poetry is small. In his own phrase, he was "but a shrimp of an author". But the *Elegy* stands in the very first rank of English verse; "our poem of poems", as Edmund Gosse calls it. Gray was busy with it during the winter of 1749, put the finishing touches in June, 1750, and sent it at once to Walpole as "a thing", he writes, "whose beginning you have seen long ago". Walpole was greatly pleased with it, detecting its permanent quality. His eager admiration caused a breach of confidence. He went so far as to distribute copies of it without Gray's knowledge. One of these fell into the hands of the publisher of a periodical (the *Magazine of Magazines*) who coolly wrote to Gray telling him of his intention to publish it. Gray took prompt action to protect himself. His instructions, given to Walpole in the letter below, were rapidly executed; and within five days Dodsley published the poem anonymously under the title: *An Elegy wrote in a Country Churchyard.* Gray received nothing for this, or indeed any of his verse, apparently thinking it

beneath the dignity of a gentleman to take money from a bookseller.

CAMBRIDGE, *February* 11, 1751.

As you have brought me into a little sort of distress, you must assist me, I believe, to get out of it as well as I can. Yesterday I had the misfortune of receiving a letter from certain gentlemen (as their bookseller expresses it), who have taken the Magazine of Magazines into their hands. They tell me that an *ingenious* poem, called "Reflections in a Country Churchyard", has been communicated to them, which they are printing forthwith: that they are informed that the *excellent* author of it is I by name, and that they beg not only his *indulgence*, but the *honour* of his correspondence, etc. As I am not at all disposed to be either so indulgent, or so correspondent, as they desire, I have but one bad way left to escape the honour they would inflict upon me; and, therefore, am obliged to desire you would make Dodsley print it immediately (which may be done in less than a week's time) from your copy; but without my name, in what form is most convenient for him; but on his best paper and character; he must correct the press himself, and print it without any interval between the stanzas, because the sense is in some places continued beyond them; and the title must be—"Elegy, written in a Country Churchyard". If he would add a line or two to say it came into his hands by accident, I should like it better. If you behold the Magazine of Magazines in the light that I do, you will not refuse to give yourself this trouble on my account, which you have taken of your own accord before now. If Dodsley do not do this immediately, he may as well let it alone.

Letter 72. Thomas Gray to the Rev. William Mason

At twenty-five, according to Mr. Gosse, Gray became a middle-aged man, "losing among the libraries of the university his last pretensions to physical elasticity". Henceforth he drowned consciousness in perpetual study. His reading in Cambridge was varied by reading in London. In January, 1759, the British Museum was thrown open to the public, and Gray, who had settled close by waiting for the official opening, at once became a regular frequenter. To reach the small reading-room, the visitor "had to pass in darkness, like Jonah, through the belly of a whale, from which he emerged into the room of the Keeper of Printed Books, Dr. Peter Templeman". In this letter to Mason we have revealed Gray's peculiar charm as a correspondent. "Except comparison with the letters of Cowper," says Mr. Herbert Paul, "there are few tests to which one could not fearlessly submit the letters of Gray." Gray's letters have not the light, deft ease of Cowper's; they lack his bubbling humour: but they have their own lively touch; they are marked by vigorous sense; they exhibit a great facility of description, and possess always the strong personal mark, revealing the writer and his friends.

At Mr. Jauncey's, Southampton Row,
Bloomsbury, *July* 23, 1759.

Dear Mason,—

I was alarmed to hear the condition you were in when you left Cambridge, and, though Mr. Brown had a letter to tell him you were mending apace while I was there, yet it would give me great pleasure to hear more particularly from yourself how you are. I am just settled in my new habitation in Southampton Row; and, though a solitary and dispirited creature, not unquiet, nor wholly unpleasant to myself. The Museum will be my chief amusement. I this day passed through the jaws of a great leviathan, that lay in my way, into the belly of Dr. Templeman, superintendent

of the reading-room, who congratulated himself on the sight of so much good company. We were,—a man that writes for Lord Royston; a man that writes for Dr. Burton of York; a third that writes for the Emperor of Germany, or Dr. Pocock, for he speaks the worst English I ever heard; Dr. Stukely, who writes for himself, the very worst person he could write for; and I, who only read to know if there were anything worth writing, and that not without some difficulty. I find that they printed one thousand copies of the *Harleian Catalogue*, and have sold fourscore; that they have £900 a year income, and spend £1300, and that they are building apartments for the under-keepers, so I expect in winter to see the collection advertised, and set to auction.

Have you read the Clarendon book? Do you remember Mr. Cambridge's account of it before it came out; how well he recollected all the faults, and how utterly he forgot all the beauties? Surely the grossest taste is better than such a sort of delicacy.

The invasion goes on as quietly as if we believed every Frenchman that set his foot on English ground would die on the spot, like a toad in Ireland; nobody but I and Forbes are in a fright about it; by the way, he goes to church, not for the invasion, but ever since his sister Castlecomer died, who was the last of the brood.

Moralise upon the death of my Lady Essex, and do write to me soon, for I am ever yours.

I have not a frank in the world, nor have I time to send to Mr. Fraser.

HORACE WALPOLE

1717–1797

Horace Walpole, the son of the famous Sir Robert, was educated at Eton, where he formed one of the famous "Quadruple Alliance", and was afterwards at Cambridge with Gray. By the time he was twenty-one his father had secured for him three sinecures—"little patent-places"—worth together £1200 a year. In 1739 he set out on the Grand Tour with Gray, who left him suddenly in May, 1741. Returning to England, Walpole made his home in London in preference to the family seat in Norfolk, as country life, with the society of heavy Whig squires, was to him hateful. In 1747 he bought Strawberry Hill, a house at Twickenham, and spent a great part of his life in making it into a "little Gothic Castle", with battlements, arches, a refectory, a cloister, and a round tower. Here, in 1757, he set up a private press, printing first the *Odes* of Gray and later (1762) his own *Anecdotes of Painting in England*.

Letter 73. Horace Walpole to Sir Horace Mann

Walpole was a bewildering mixture of independence, effeminacy, and real genius, who lives by his prolific and unique correspondence. No one to-day reads *The Mysterious Mother*; few even *The Castle of Otranto*. His fame—and a solid fame it is—rests on his nine volumes of what Byron, an excellent judge, called "incomparable letters". The work of a clear and precise mind, an acute observer, relentlessly critical, they form a racy summary of all events of note in contemporary politics, literature, and art. Walpole never hesitates over a judgment, or mistrusts an impression. His eye ranges with impartial concern over the myriad enterprises of Vanity Fair. True, his sarcasm is often bitter, his irony cutting, his appreciations spiteful, his universal tolerance cynical—but he is always vivacious; often lacking in good-humour, but never in wit. Every one of the many figures in his wide canvas is alive. He makes us see them as human beings. The picture of Lady Mary in the following letter is a good instance. "Add his keen touches, and, as in *The Castle of Otranto*, the portraits of our respectable old ancestors, which have been hanging in gloomy repose upon the wall, suddenly step from their frames, and, for some brief space, assume a spectral

vitality." It is one of the wonders of the world of literature, that this sparkling commentary should have been maintained for over sixty years.

ARLINGTON STREET, *Jan.* 29, 1762.

. . . I am ashamed to tell you that we are again dipped into an egregious scene of folly. The reigning fashion is a ghost—a ghost, that would not pass muster in the paltriest convent in the Apennine. It only knocks and scratches; does not pretend to appear or to speak. The clergy give it their benediction; and all the world, whether believers or infidels, go to hear it. I, in which number you may guess, go to-morrow; for it is as much the mode to visit the ghost as the Prince of Mecklenburg, who is just arrived. I have not seen him yet, though I have left my name for him. But I will tell you who is come too—Lady Mary Wortley. I went last night to visit her; I give you my honour, and you who know her, would credit me without it, the following is a faithful description. I found her in a little miserable bedchamber of a ready-furnished house, with two tallow candles, and a bureau covered with pots and pans. On her head, in full of all accounts, she had an old black-laced hood, wrapped entirely round, so as to conceal all hair or want of hair. No handkerchief, but up to her chin a kind of horseman's riding-coat, calling itself a pet-en-l'air, made of a dark green (green I think it had been) brocade, with coloured and silver flowers, and lined with furs; boddice laced, a foul dimity petticoat sprig'd, velvet muffeteens on her arms, grey stockings and slippers. Her face less changed in twenty years than I could have imagined; I told her so, and she was not so tolerable twenty years ago that

she needed have taken it for flattery, but she did, and literally gave me a box on the ear. She is very lively, all her senses perfect, her languages as imperfect as ever, her avarice greater. She entertained me at first with nothing but the dearness of provisions at Helvoet. With nothing but an Italian, a French, and a Prussian, all men servants, and something she calls an *old* secretary, but whose age till he appears will be doubtful; she receives all the world, who go to homage her as Queen Mother, and crams them into this kennel. The Duchess of Hamilton, who came in just after me, was so astonished and diverted, that she could not speak to her for laughing. . . .

Letter 74. Horace Walpole to the Rev. William Cole

One of the most striking developments in eighteenth-century literature is the revival of mediævalism—the "Renascence of Wonder"—which reached its efflorescence in the romances of Scott. Of the school of fiction which arose from this, the founder was Horace Walpole. In 1764, as the result of a strangely vivid dream, he abandoned for a time his architectural dabblings to write *The Castle of Otranto*. The success of the tale was extraordinary; and Walpole dropped the cloak of anonymity (temporarily assumed) when he found he was being hailed as the inventor of "Gothic Romance". His lead was followed by Clara Reeve in *The Old English Baron*; and he was beaten at his own game of curdling the blood by Mrs. Radcliffe in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. "Clanging portals, echoing corridors, hollow voices, haunted chambers, moth-eaten manuscripts, and daggers that dripped blood became the order of the day."

Strawberry Hill, *March* 9, 1765.

Dear Sir,—

I had time to write but a short note with the "Castle of Otranto", as your messenger called

on me at four o'clock, as I was going to dine abroad. Your partiality to me and Strawberry have, I hope, inclined you to excuse the wildness of the story. You will even have found some traits to put you in mind of this place. When you read of the picture quitting its panel, did not you recollect the portrait of Lord Falkland, all in white, in my Gallery? Shall I even confess to you, what was the origin of this romance! I waked one morning, in the beginning of last June, from a dream, of which, all I could recover was, that I had thought myself in an ancient castle (a very natural dream for a head filled like mine with Gothic story), and that on the uppermost banister of a great staircase I saw a gigantic hand in armour. In the evening, I sat down, and began to write, without knowing in the least what I intended to say or relate. The work grew on my hands, and I grew fond of it—add, that I was very glad to think of anything, rather than politics. In short, I was so engrossed with my tale, which I completed in less than two months, that one evening, I wrote from the time I had drunk my tea, about six o'clock, till half an hour after one in the morning, when my hand and fingers were so weary, that I could not hold the pen to finish the sentence, but left Matilda and Isabella talking, in the middle of a paragraph. You will laugh at my earnestness; but if I have amused you, by retracing with any fidelity the manners of ancient days, I am content, and give you leave to think me idle as you please. . . .

Lord Essex's trial is printed with the State Trials. In return for your obliging offer, I can acquaint you with a delightful publication of this winter, A

Collection of Old Ballads and Poetry, in three volumes, many from Pepys's Collection at Cambridge. There were three such published between thirty and forty years ago, but very carelessly, and wanting many in this set: indeed, there were others, of a looser sort, which the present editor [Bishop Percy], who is a clergyman, thought it decent to omit.

My bower is determined, but not at all what it is to be. Though I write romances, I cannot tell how to build all that belongs to them. Madame Danois, in the Fairy Tales, used to *tapestry* them with *jonquils*; but as that furniture will not last above a fortnight in the year, I shall prefer something more huckaback. I have decided that the outside shall be of *treillage*, which, however, I shall not commence till I have again seen some of old Louis's old-fashioned *Galanteries* at Versailles. Rosamond's bower, you, and I, and Tom Hearne know, was a labyrinth: but as my territory will admit of a very short clew, I lay aside all thoughts of a mazy habitation: though a bower is very different from an arbour, and must have more chambers than one. In short, I both know and don't know what it should be. I am almost afraid I must go and read Spenser, and wade through his allegories and drawling stanzas to get at a picture. But, good-night! you see how one gossips when one is alone and at quiet on one's own dunghill! Well! it may be trifling; yet it is such trifling as Ambition never is happy enough to know! Ambition orders palaces, but it is Content that chats for a page or two over a bower.

Letter 75. Horace Walpole to Thomas Gray

In the spring of 1767 Gray was asked by Dodsley (the younger) to permit a cheap republication of his poems. Later in the year a similar application was made by a Glasgow publisher. Accordingly the collection issued from the two presses in 1768. Gray added a few explanatory notes "out of spite," he said, "because the public did not understand the two odes which I called Pindaric". Even with additional matter the book was small, not a hundred and twenty pages. It appeared in July, 1768. Gray humorously expresses to Walpole his fear lest "my works should be mistaken for the works of a flea". Walpole's letter shows plainly his chagrin at not being consulted regarding the edition.

Arlington Street, *Feb.* 18, 1768.

You have sent me a long and very obliging letter, and yet I am extremely out of humour with you. I saw *Poems by Mr. Gray* advertised: I called directly at Dodsley's to know if this was to be more than a new edition? He was not at home himself, but his foreman told me he thought there were some new pieces, and notes to the whole. It was very unkind, not only to go out of town without mentioning them to me, without showing them to me, but not to say a word of them in this letter. Do you think I am indifferent, or not curious about what you write? I have ceased to ask you, because you have so long refused to show me anything. You could not suppose I thought that you never write. No; but I concluded you did not intend, at least yet, to publish what you had written. As you did intend it, I might have expected a month's preference. You will do me the justice to own that I had always rather have seen your writings than

have shown you mine; which you know are the most hasty trifles in the world, and which though I may be fond of the subject when fresh, I constantly forget in a very short time after they are published. This would sound like affectation to others, but will not to you. It would be affected, even to you, to say I am indifferent to fame. I certainly am not, but I am indifferent to almost anything I have done to acquire it. . . .

Letter 76. Horace Walpole to Thomas Chatterton

Chatterton was the author of one of the most consummate literary hoaxes ever perpetrated. A mere boy of sixteen, he invented a literary monk of the fifteenth century, and gave him as literary patron a historical character, a Bristol dignitary named Master Canynge. Professing to have discovered a store of manuscript in Canynge's Coffer, in the muniment room of St. Mary Redcliffe, he sent to Horace Walpole an alleged transcript of a work by this monk called *The Ryse of Peyncteynge yn Englande*. Walpole, as this letter of acknowledgment shows, was completely hoaxed. He plainly thought he was in correspondence with a gentleman of antiquarian tastes like his own, and hoped to share in the distinction of bringing to light a literary "find" of rare value. His disappointment when the truth came out must have been keen, and helps to explain his subsequent severity. Chatterton had to write three letters, forming a *crescendo* in curtness, before he could obtain the return of his MSS.

Arlington Street, *March* 28, 1769.

Sir,—

I cannot but think myself singularly obliged by a gentleman with whom I have not the pleasure of being acquainted, when I read your very curious and kind letter, which I have this minute received. I give you a thousand

thanks for it and for the very obliging offer you make me of communicating your MSS. to me. What you have already sent me is very valuable and full of information; but, instead of correcting you, Sir, you are far more able to correct me. I have not the happiness of understanding the Saxon language, and without your learned notes should not have been able to comprehend Rowley's text.

As a second edition of my "Anecdotes" was published last year, I must not flatter myself that a third will be wanted soon; but I shall be happy to lay up any notices you will be so good as to extract for me, and send me at your leisure; for as it is uncertain when I may use them, I would by no means borrow and detain your MSS.

Give me leave to ask you where Rowley's poems are to be found? I should not be sorry to print them; or at least a specimen of them, if they have never been printed.

The Abbot John's verses, that you have given me, are wonderful for their harmony and spirit; though there are some words I do not understand. You do not point out exactly the time when he lived, which I wish to know; as I suppose it was long before John Eyck's discovery of oil-painting. If so, it confirms what I had guessed, and have hinted in my "Anecdotes", that oil-painting was known here much earlier than that discovery or revival.

I will not trouble you with more questions now, Sir, but flatter myself from the humanity and politeness you have already shown me that you will sometimes give me leave to consult you. I hope, too, you will forgive the simplicity

of my direction, as you have favoured me with none other.

I am, Sir, your much obliged and obedient humble servant,

HOR. WALPOLE.

P.S.—Be so good as to direct to Mr. Walpole, Arlington St.

LETTER 77. HORACE WALPOLE TO THE REV. WILLIAM COLE

Chatterton died by his own hand in his garret, August, 1770. It was not long before a storm of controversy began to rage over his productions. There was at that time little knowledge of early English, and the genuineness of the Rowley poems found sturdy championship. Equally loud were the cries of Rowleyans and anti-Rowleyans. Walpole was dragged into the bitter dispute; and he was censured for the callousness he had shown at the fate of one on whom he had smiled so readily, and whom he might so easily have assisted. Walpole found it by no means easy to clear his reputation. In attempting to justify himself he was guilty of an act both mean and cowardly. He repudiated as a forgery the encouraging letter (March 28, 1769) which he had written to Chatterton. This letter is now in the British Museum with its wafer and postmark complete. It was left by Chatterton in the hands of his friend Barrett, the Bristol surgeon, whose researches into the history of the city had fired the lad's antiquarian zeal.

STRAWBERRY HILL, *June* 19, 1777.

I thank you for your notices, dear Sir, and shall remember that on Prince William. I did see the *Monthly Review*, but hope one is not guilty of the death of every man who does not make one the dupe of a forgery. I believe M'Pherson's success with "Ossian" was more the ruin of Chatterton

than I. Two years passed between my doubting the authenticity of Rowley's poems and his death. I never knew he had been in London till some time after he had undone and poisoned himself there. The poems he sent me were transcripts in his own hand, and even in that circumstance he told a lie: he said he had them from the very person at Bristol to whom he had given them. If any man was to tell you that monkish rhymes had been dug up at Herculaneum, which was destroyed several centuries before there was any such poetry, should you believe it? Just the reverse is the case of Rowley's pretended poems. They have all the elegance of Waller and Prior, and more than Lord Surrey—but I have no objection to anybody believing what he pleases. I think poor Chatterton was an astonishing genius—but I cannot think that Rowley foresaw metres that were invented long after he was dead, or that our language was more refined at Bristol in the reign of Henry V than it was at Court under Henry VIII. One of the chaplains of the Bishop of Exeter has found a line of Rowley in "Hudibras"—the monk might foresee that too! The prematurity of Chatterton's genius is, however, full as wonderful, as that such a prodigy as Rowley should never have been heard of till the eighteenth century. The youth and industry of the former are miracles, too, yet still more credible. There is not a symptom in the poems, but the old words, that savours of Rowley's age—change the old words for modern, and the whole construction is of yesterday.

Letter 78. Horace Walpole to Miss Berry

The two sisters, Mary and Agnes Berry, Walpole's "twin wives", came in 1787 to reside with their father in the neighbourhood of Strawberry Castle. They are described as accomplished and pleasing in appearance. Their companionship became very dear to Walpole in his declining years. So warm was his regard for Mary, it is said, that, in spite of his age, he would have married her and left her his fortune of £90,000. For the amusement of the two ladies he wrote his *Reminiscences of the Courts of George I and II.* He provided for them in his will by leaving them a house and garden adjoining Strawberry Castle and £4000 each. Mary Berry edited an issue of Walpole's *Works* in five volumes, which appeared in 1798.

Berkeley Square, *May* 26, 1791.

I am rich in letters from you; I received that by Lord Elgin's courier first, as you expected, and its elder the next day. You tell me mine entertain you: *tant mieux.* It is my wish, but my wonder; for I live so little in the world, that I do not know the present generation by sight: for, though I pass by them in the streets, the hats with valences, the folds above the chin of the ladies, and the dirty shirts and shaggy hair of the young men who have levelled nobility almost as much as the nobility in France have, have confounded all individuality. . . .

The rest of my letter must be literary; for we have no news. Boswell's book is gossiping, but, having numbers of proper names, would be more readable, at least by me, were it reduced from two volumes to one: but there are woful *longueurs*, both about his hero and himself, the *fidus Achates*; about whom one has not the smallest curiosity. But I wrong the original Achates; one is satisfied with his fidelity in keeping his master's secrets and weaknesses, which modern led-captains betray for

their patron's glory and to hurt their own enemies; which Boswell has done shamefully, particularly against Mrs. Piozzi, and Mrs. Montagu, and Bishop Percy. Dr. Blagden says justly, that it is a new kind of libel, by which you may abuse anybody, by saying some dead person said so and so of somebody alive. Often, indeed, Johnson made the most brutal speeches to living persons; for though he was good-natured at bottom, he was very ill-natured at top. He loved to dispute, to show his superiority. If his opponents were weak, he told them they were fools; if they vanquished him, he was scurrilous—to nobody more than to Boswell himself, who was contemptible for flattering him so grossly, and for enduring the coarse things he was continually vomiting on Boswell's own country, Scotland. I expected, amongst the excommunicated, to find myself, but am very gently treated. I never would be in the least acquainted with Johnson; or, as Boswell calls it, I had not a just value for him; which the biographer imputes to my resentment for the doctor's putting bad arguments (purposely, out of Jacobitism) into the speeches which he wrote fifty years ago for my father, in the *Gentleman's Magazine*; which I did not read then, or ever knew Johnson wrote till Johnson died, nor have looked at since. Johnson's blind Toryism and known brutality kept me aloof; nor did I ever exchange a syllable with him: nay, I do not think I ever was in the room with him six times in my days. Boswell came to me, said Dr. Johnson was writing the *Lives of the Poets*, and wished I would give him anecdotes of Mr. Gray. I said, very coldly, I had given what I knew to Mr. Mason. Boswell hummed and hawed and

then dropped, "I suppose you know Dr. Johnson does not admire Mr. Gray". Putting as much contempt as I could into my look and tone, I said, 'Dr. Johnson don't!—humph!'—and with that monosyllable ended our interview. After the doctor's death, Burke, Sir Joshua Reynolds, and Boswell sent an ambling circular-letter to me, begging subscriptions for a monument for him—the two last, I think, impertinently; as they could not but know my opinion, and could not suppose I would contribute to a monument for one who had endeavoured, poor soul! to degrade my friend's superlative poetry, I would not deign to write an answer; but sent down word by my footman, as I would have done to parish officers with a brief, that I would not subscribe. In the two new volumes Johnson says, and very probably did, or is made to say, that Gray's poetry is *dull*, and that he was a *dull* man! The same oracle dislikes Prior, Swift, and Fielding. If an elephant could write a book, perhaps one that had read a great deal would say, that an Arabian horse is a very clumsy, ungraceful animal. Pass to a better chapter.

Burke has published another pamphlet against the French Revolution, in which he attacks it still more grievously. The beginning is very good; but it is not equal nor quite so injurious as parts of its predecessor; is far less brilliant, as well as much shorter: but, were it ever so long, his mind overflows with such a torrent of images, that he cannot be tedious. His invective against Rousseau is admirable, just, and new. Voltaire he passes almost contemptuously. I wish he had dissected Mirabeau too; and I grieve that he has omitted the violation of the consciences of the clergy, nor

stigmatized those universal plunderers, the National Assembly, who gorge themselves with eighteen livres a-day; which to many of them would, three years ago, have been astonishing opulence. . . .

THOMAS CHATTERTON

1752–1770

Chatterton, a Bristol Blue-coat boy, son of a poor widow, conceived the romantic fiction of a fifteenth-century monkish poet (to whom he gave the name Thomas Rowley) writing poetry under the patronage of a Bristol dignitary, Master William Canynge. Among other fabrications was an imaginary account of the opening of Bristol Bridge in the time of Henry II which deceived even local antiquaries. When nearly fifteen, Chatterton was bound apprentice to an attorney, in the leisure of whose office he continued his pursuits, though his master often rummaged his drawer and tore up his scribblings. In December, 1768, he offered, in a letter to Dodsley the publisher, to procure "copies of several ancient poems" by Rowley, "a priest in Bristol, who lived in the reigns of Henry VI and Edward IV". Receiving no answer from Dodsley, Chatterton bethought him of Walpole, at that time becoming known as author of the pseudo-mediæval *Castle of Otranto*. He wrote, submitting the manuscript of *The Ryse of Peyncteynge yn Englande, wroten by T. Rowleie, 1469, for Mastre Canynge*. Walpole replied courteously, praising the verses as "wonderful for their harmony and spirit". He asked where Rowley's poems were to be had, desiring to print them. Chatterton replied, sending more verses and disclosing his private circumstances. By this time Walpole had been able to get Gray's verdict on the poems, and, learning that they were really modern, he coldly advised Chatterton to stick to his desk.

Letter 79. Thomas Chatterton to Horace Walpole

The following short note accompanied the MS. of the *Ryse of Peyncteynge*. The Notes referred to explained the positions

of Rowley and Canynge, Rowley being a Secular priest of St. John's in Bristol and distinguished as biographer, historiographer, and poet; while Canynge was the founder of St. Mary Redcliffe and "the Maecenas of his time". The first three volumes of Walpole's *Anecdotes* had been published in 1762.

BRISTOL, *March 25th* [1769], CORN STREET.

SIR,—

Being versed a little in Antiquities, I have met with several curious Manuscripts, among which the following may be of service to you in any future Edition of your truly entertaining "Anecdotes of Painting". In correcting the mistakes (if any) in the Notes, you will greatly oblige,

Your most humble servant,

THOMAS CHATTERTON.

LETTER 80. THOMAS CHATTERTON TO HIS SISTER

In April, 1770, Chatterton persuaded his master to cancel his indentures, and determined to take London by storm. With the aid of a few friends he got together £5, and commenced his desperate struggle to live by literature. He tried every kind of writing—poem, essay, story, political squib, song. At that time the Wilkes agitation was at its height, and Chatterton gained access to editors by writing letters on the popular side in the style of Junius. The following letter to his sister shows what high hopes he at one time entertained. He won his way to the presence of the lord mayor, Beckford, at that time leading the city against the king. But, before help could be given, this great patron died. The loss crushed Chatterton. It was in this dark hour he wrote the exquisite *Ballad of Charity*. Eleven guineas were promised and due to him for essays and articles contributed to various magazines. But he was penniless. As a last effort to get employment, he applied for a post as ship's surgeon, but was rejected. Too proud to ask for help or to accept food from neighbours, he removed to a garret in Holborn and there took arsenic.

TOM'S COFFEE-HOUSE, *May 30th*, 1770.

DEAR SISTER,—

There is such a noise of business and politics in the room, that my inaccuracy in writing here is excusable. My present profession obliges me to frequent places of the best resort. To begin with, what every female conversation begins with, dress: I employ my money now in fitting myself fashionably, and getting into good company; this last article always brings me interest. But I have engaged to live with a gentleman, the brother of a lord (a Scotch one, indeed) who is going to advance pretty deeply in the bookselling branches: I shall have lodging and boarding, genteel and elegant, gratis: this article, in the quarter of the town he lives, with worse accommodations, would be £50 per annum. I shall likewise have no inconsiderable premium; and assure yourself every month shall end to your advantage. I will send you two silks this summer; and expect, in answer to this, what colours you prefer. My mother shall not be forgotten. My employment will be writing a voluminous History of London, to appear in numbers the beginning of next winter. As this will not, like writing political essays, oblige me to go to the coffee-house, I shall be able to serve you the more by it; but it will necessitate me to go to Oxford, Cambridge, Lincoln, Coventry and every collegiate church near; not at all disagreeable journeys, and not to me expensive. The Manuscript Glossary I mentioned in my last must not be omitted. If money flowed as fast upon me as honours, I would give you a portion of £5,000. You have doubtless heard of the Lord Mayor's

remonstrating and addressing the King; but it will be a piece of news to inform you that I have been with the Lord Mayor on the occasion. Having addressed an essay to his Lordship, it was very well received—perhaps better than it deserved; and I waited on his Lordship to have his approbation to address a second letter to him, on the subject of the remonstrance and its reception. His Lordship received me as politely as a citizen could, and warmly invited me to call on him again. The rest is a secret.—But the devil of the matter is, there is no money to be got on this side of the question. Interest is on the other side. But he is a poor author who cannot write on both sides. I believe I may be introduced (and, if I am not, I'll introduce myself) to a ruling power in the Court party. I might have a recommendation to Sir George Colebrook, an East Indian Director, as qualified for an office no-ways despicable; but I shall not take a step to the sea whilst I can continue on land. . . . They publish the *Gospel Magazine* here. For a whim I write in it. I believe there are not any sent to Bristol; they are hardly worth the carriage—methodistical and unmeaning. With the usual ceremonies to my mother and grandmother, and sincerely, without ceremony, wishing them both happy; when it is in my power to make them so, it shall be so; and with my kind remembrance to Miss Webb and Miss Thorne, I remain, as I ever was,

Yours, etc. to the end of the chapter,

THOMAS CHATTERTON.

TOBIAS SMOLLETT

1721–1771

In spite of Scott's high tribute to his genius, Smollett is now generally regarded as the least brilliant of that great quartette of novelists which made lustrous the middle of the eighteenth century. Born in Dumbartonshire and educated at Glasgow University, he was apprenticed to a Glasgow physician. His earliest literary effort was a poor tragedy, *The Regicide*, with which he went to London. There he joined the navy as surgeon, and took part in the expedition to Carthagena. In 1748 was published *Roderick Random*, which established his fame, and led him to abandon medicine for literature. Smollett was a man of irritable temper, and quarrelled with Fielding, Garrick, and other literary acquaintances. His weak health drove him to the Continent, and he settled near Leghorn, where, just before death, he completed his finest work, *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker*. Thackeray says of Smollett: "He did not invent much, but had the keenest perceptive faculty, and described what he saw with wonderful relish and delightful broad humour". Thackeray thought *Humphry Clinker* "the most remarkable story that has ever been written since the goodly art of novel-writing began".

Letter 81. Tobias Smollett to John Wilkes

One of the best loved of Johnson's friends was Dr. Bathurst, a physician who died while on the expedition to Havannah (1762). It was of him that Johnson said: "He was a very good hater". Francis Barber had been the slave of Dr. Bathurst's father, by whose will he was set free. Bathurst transferred him to Johnson, by whom he was sent to school at considerable expense. Barber once ran away and entered the navy. His discharge was obtained by John Wilkes, who became M.P. for Aylesbury in 1757. Wilkes' good offices, as this letter shows, were secured by Smollett. Barber became an important member of Johnson's household, though no one could discover what special services he rendered, as Johnson's wig was never combed or his clothes brushed.

CHELSEA, *March* 16, 1759.

DEAR SIR,—

I am again your petitioner, in behalf of that great Cham of literature, Samuel Johnson. His black servant, whose name is Francis Barber, has been pressed on board the *Stag Frigate*, Captain Angel, and our lexicographer is in great distress. He says the boy is a sickly lad, of a delicate frame, and particularly subject to a malady in his throat, which renders him very unfit for his Majesty's service. You know what manner of animosity the said Johnson has against you; and I dare say you desire no other opportunity of resenting it than that of laying him under an obligation. He was humble enough to desire my assistance on this occasion, though he and I were never cater-cousins; and I gave him to understand that I would make application to my friend Mr. Wilkes, who, perhaps, by his interest with Dr. Hay and Mr. Elliot, might be able to procure the discharge of his lacquey. It would be superfluous to say more on the subject, which I leave to your consideration; but I cannot let slip this opportunity of declaring that I am, with the most unviolable esteem and attachment, dear Sir, your affectionate, obliged, humble servant,

T. SMOLLETT.

OLIVER GOLDSMITH

1728–1774

Goldsmith was the son of a poor Irish clergyman and one of a large family. He entered Trinity College, Dublin, as a sizar in 1744. His uncle, Rev. Thomas Contarine, came to his help in 1752, sending him to Edinburgh to study medicine.

He continued his studies at Leyden, and made a tour through Flanders, Germany, and Italy, in the course of which he is said to have taken a degree at Louvain. After doing the Grand Tour on foot, he returned to England in 1756. Bitter poverty now became his lot. He obtained a post as junior master in a school, where, in his own words, he was "browbeat by the master, hated for my ugly face by the mistress, and worried by the boys". After an attempt to make a living out of his medical knowledge, he became a literary hack to Griffiths, the bookseller.

Letter 82. Oliver Goldsmith to Daniel Hodson

Griffiths, "illiterate, bookselling" Griffiths, was the proprietor of the *Monthly Review*, and for this Goldsmith had to write as he was bid. He boarded with his employer, and complained afterwards that all he wrote was tampered with by Griffiths or his wife. Goldsmith's position was irksome, and he felt it to be degrading. For five months of the year 1757 this engagement lasted, then suddenly ceased. Evidently there was a serious quarrel. Griffiths accused him of idleness. Goldsmith complained of hard treatment; that the master refused him common respect, and the mistress ordinary comforts. Goldsmith left the house, but did not quite shake off Griffiths' hold on him. For the next few months he lived precariously. His letters were sent to the Temple Exchange Coffee House, where a friendly waiter took charge of them. He had a garret, where he wrote and slept; and there one day he was surprised by a visit from his youngest brother Charles, who had scrambled over to London as best he could in the hope of finding help from a well-to-do author. Charles stayed a few days, then emigrated to Jamaica, not to return for thirty-four years. This letter to Daniel Hodson gives us practically all that we know about this gloomy period in Goldsmith's career. Hodson was his brother-in-law, having married his elder sister Catherine.

Temple Exchange Coffee House,
December 27, 1757.

It may be four years since my last letters went to Ireland, and from you in particular I received no answer, probably because you never wrote to

me. My brother Charles, however, informs me of the fatigue you were at in soliciting a subscription to assist me, not only among my friends and relations, but acquaintances in general. Though my pride might feel some repugnance in being thus relieved, yet my gratitude can suffer no diminution. How much am I obliged to you, to them, for such generosity, or (why should not your virtues have the proper name?) for such charity to me at that juncture. . . . Let me only add, that my not receiving that supply, was the cause of my present establishment in London. You may easily imagine what difficulties I had to encounter, left as I was without friends, recommendations, money, or impudence; and that in a country where being born an Irishman was sufficient to keep me unemployed. Many in such circumstances would have had recourse to the friar's end, or the suicide's halter. But with all my follies, I had principle to resist the one, and resolution to combat the other.

I suppose you desire to know my present situation: as there is nothing in it at which I should blush, or which mankind could censure, I see no reason for making it a secret. In short, by a very little practice as a physician, and a very little reputation as a poet, I make a shift to live. Nothing is more apt to introduce us to the gates of the Muses than poverty; but it were well for us if they only left us at the door; the mischief is, they sometimes choose to give us their company at the entertainments; and Want, instead of being gentleman-usher, often turns master of the ceremonies. Thus, upon hearing I write, no doubt you imagine I starve: and the name of an author naturally reminds you of a garret. In this particular I do

not think proper to undeceive my friends; but whether I eat or starve, live in first floor, or four pairs of stairs high, I still remember *them* with ardour, nay, my very country comes in for a share of my affection.

If I go to the opera, where Signora Columba pours out all the mazes of melody, I sit and sigh for Lishoy fireside, and Johnny Armstrong's Last Good Night from Peggy Golden. If I climb Hampstead Hill, than where nature never exhibited a more magnificent prospect, I confess it fine, but then I had rather be placed upon the little mount before Lishoy gate, and there take in, to me, the most pleasing horizon in nature. Before Charles came hither, my thoughts sometimes found refuge from severe studies among my friends in Ireland. I fancied strange revolutions at home; but I find it was the rapidity of my own motion that gave an imaginary one to objects really at rest. No alterations there. Some friends, he tells me are still lean, but very rich; others very fat, but still very poor. Nay, all the news I hear of you is, that you and Mrs. Hodson sometimes sally out in visits among the neighbours, and sometimes make a migration from the blue bed to the brown. I could from my heart wish that you and she, and Lishoy, and Ballymahon, and all of you, would fairly make a migration into Middlesex; though, upon second thoughts, this might be attended with a few inconveniences. Therefore, as the mountain will not come to Mahomet, why Mahomet shall go the mountain; or, to speak plain English, as you cannot conveniently pay me a visit, if next summer I can contrive to be absent six weeks from London, I shall spend three

of them among my friends in Ireland; but first believe me, my design is purely to visit, and neither to cut a figure, nor levy contributions; neither to excite envy, nor solicit favour. In fact, my circumstances are adapted to neither. I am too poor to be gazed at, and too rich to need assistance.

You see, dear Dan, how long I have been talking about myself; but attribute my vanity to my affection, as every man is fond of himself; and I consider you as a second self, and imagine you will consequently be pleased with these instances of egotism. . . .

Your affectionate kinsman,

OLIVER GOLDSMITH.

LETTER 83. OLIVER GOLDSMITH TO RALPH GRIFFITHS

In December, 1758, Goldsmith appeared before the College of Surgeons for examination, in the hope of obtaining a medical diploma, but failed to satisfy the Court of Examiners. To make a respectable appearance, he obtained a suit of clothes from a tailor, Griffiths being his security. Payment was to be made by Goldsmith writing four articles for the *Monthly Review*. A few days after, the wife of his landlord came to him with tears and wailing. Her husband was in the hands of the bailiffs for debt. Goldsmith took the new suit and four books he had just reviewed for Griffiths and left them in pledge for a small loan. By some means Griffiths speedily found this out, and at once wrote demanding the return of books and clothes, or instant payment for both. The harsh words "sharper" and "villain" were thrown by the angry bookseller. Ultimately the matter was settled by Goldsmith's entering into a contract to write a life of Voltaire, the payment to be £20, from which the price of the suit should be deducted.

January, 1759.

SIR,—

I know of no misery but a jail to which my own imprudences and your letter seem to point. I have seen it inevitable these three or four weeks, and, by heavens! request it as a favour—as a favour that may prevent something more fatal. I have been some years struggling with a wretched being—with all that contempt and indigence bring with it—with all those passions which make contempt insupportable. What, then, has a jail that is formidable? I shall at least have the society of wretches, and such is to me true society. I tell you, again and again, that I am neither able nor willing to pay you a farthing, but I will be punctual to any appointment you or the tailor shall make; thus far, at least, I do not act the sharper, since, unable to pay my own debts one way, I would generally give some security another. No, sir; had I been a sharper—had I been possessed of less good nature and native generosity, I might surely now have been in better circumstances.

I am guilty, I own, of meannesses which poverty unavoidably brings with it: my reflections are filled with repentance for my imprudence, but not with any remorse for being a villain; that may be a character you unjustly charge me with. Your books, I can assure you, are neither pawned nor sold, but in the custody of a friend, from whom my necessities obliged me to borrow some money: whatever becomes of my person, you shall have them in a month. It is very possible both the reports you have heard, and your own suggestions, may have brought you false information

with respect to my character; it is very possible that the man whom you now regard with detestation may inwardly burn with grateful resentment. It is very possible that, upon a second perusal of the letter I sent you, you may see the workings of a mind strongly agitated with gratitude and jealousy. If such circumstances should appear, at least spare invective till my book with Mr. Dodsley shall be published, and then, perhaps, you may see the bright side of a mind, when my professions shall not appear the dictates of necessity, but of choice.

You seem to think Dr. Milner knew me not. Perhaps so; but he was a man I shall ever honour; but I have friendships only with the dead! I ask pardon for taking up so much time; nor shall I add to it by any other professions than that I am, sir, your humble servant,

OLIVER GOLDSMITH.

P.S.—I shall expect impatiently the result of your resolutions.

LETTER 84. OLIVER GOLDSMITH TO BENNET LANGTON

When Johnson founded the Literary Club in 1764, Bennet Langton was one of the original members along with Goldsmith, Burke, Reynolds, and others. Goldsmith got on well with the gentle-hearted Langton; and Reynolds and Goldsmith undertook to visit Langton at his family seat in Lincolnshire. Goldsmith meanwhile went down to the village of Hyde, near Hendon, where he had quiet quarters at a farm. He was busy with his new comedy, *She Stoops to Conquer*. Goldsmith was very fond of this humble resort, and the farmer's family showed both respect and liking for one whom they called "The Gentleman". So absorbed did he become in the progress of his comedy that the visit was postponed,

and he wrote this letter to Langton immediately after returning to town.

BRICK COURT, *September* 7, 1772.

MY DEAR SIR,—

Since I had the pleasure of seeing you last, I have been almost wholly in the country at a farmer's house, quite alone, trying to write a comedy. It is now finished; but when or how it will be acted, or whether it will be acted at all, are questions I cannot resolve. I am therefore so much employed upon that, that I am under the necessity of putting off my intended visit to Lincolnshire for this season. Reynolds is just returned from Paris, and finds himself now in the case of a truant that must make up for his idle time by diligence. We have therefore agreed to postpone our journey till next summer, when we hope to have the honour of waiting upon Lady Rothes and you, and staying double the time of our late intended visit. We often meet, and never without remembering you. I see Mr. Beauclerc very often both in town and country. He is now going directly forward to become a second Boyle; deep in chemistry and physics. Johnson has been down on a visit to a country parson, Dr. Taylor; and is returned to his haunts at Mrs. Thrale's. Burke is a farmer, *en attendant* a better place; but visiting about too. Every soul is visiting about and merry but myself. And that is hard too, as I have been trying these three months to do something to make people laugh. There have I been strolling about the hedges, studying jests with a most tragical countenance. The *Natural History* is about half finished, and I will shortly finish the rest. God knows I am tired of this

kind of finishing, which is but bungling work; and that not so much my fault as the fault of my scurvy circumstances. They begin to talk in town of the Opposition's gaining ground; the cry of liberty is still as loud as ever. I have published, or Davies has published for me, an *Abridgement of the History of England*, for which I have been a good deal abused in the newspapers, for betraying the liberties of the people. God knows I had no thought for or against liberty in my head; my whole aim being to make up a book of a decent size, that as, Squire Richard says, *would do no harm to nobody*. However, they set me down as an arrant Tory, and consequently an honest man. When you come to look at any part of it, you'll say that I am a sore Whig. God bless you, and with my most respectful compliments to her ladyship, I remain, dear Sir, your most affectionate humble servant,

OLIVER GOLDSMITH.

EDMUND BURKE

1729–1797

Burke was a native of Dublin, and, like Goldsmith, a student of Trinity College. He entered the Middle Temple (London), but soon abandoned law as a profession. In 1756 he published anonymously his parody of Bolingbroke's philosophy called *A Vindication of Natural Society*. Next year there appeared his well-known *Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, in which for the first time the subject of Aesthetics was treated as a separate branch of study. This brought him into the society of Johnson and Goldsmith. His political career commenced, in 1761, with his appointment as private secretary to "Single-speech"

Hamilton, Secretary for Ireland. Entering Parliament as member for Wendover (1765), he came to the front with his eloquence and political knowledge. His *Thoughts on the Present Discontents* appeared in 1770. It is significant that Goldsmith in enumerating his friends in a letter of this year to his brother Maurice (January, 1770) mentions Burke first —"Burke, Johnson, Reynolds, and Colman". Burke's finest oratorical efforts were the speeches on *American Taxation* and on *Conciliation with America.* He was appointed by the Commons (1788) to conduct the impeachment of Warren Hastings, and in 1790 encouraged resistance to France by his widely read *Reflections on the French Revolution.* Though he was the foremost orator of his day, Burke was notoriously awkward in his delivery.

Letter 85. Edmund Burke to Charles Townshend

Great excitement prevailed in London when, in January, 1769, there appeared in the *Public Advertiser* the first of a series of seventy political letters signed "Junius". The quarrel with the American colonies had spread a feeling of dissatisfaction throughout the country, which was intensified by the persecution of Wilkes. These letters, attacking most of the public men of the day, exposed many scandals. Even royalty itself was not spared. Their language was brilliant and trenchant: in sarcasm and boldness they were unrivalled. In vain did the Government try to discover their author. In order to discredit Burke, the ministry encouraged the report that he was Junius. Burke was too proud to listen to the urgent requests of his friends that he should publish a disclaimer. To Johnson, indeed, he gave a frank denial; but it was some time before his friend Townshend's importunity elicited from Burke the definite assurance that he was not the author of Junius and did not know the author.

October 17th, 1771.

Dear Sir,—

I am much obliged to you for the kind part you have taken, on the report of our friend Fitzherbert's conversation about the author of Junius. You have done it in a manner that is

just to me, and delicate to both of us. I am indeed extremely ready to believe, that he has had no share in circulating an opinion so very injurious to me, as that I am capable of treating the character of my friends, and even my own character, with levity, in order to be able to attack that of others with the less suspicion. When I have anything to object to persons in power, they know very well that I use no sort of managements towards them, except those which every honest man owes to his own dignity. If I thought it necessary to bring the same charges against them into a more public discussion than that of the House of Commons, I should use exactly the same freedom, making myself, in the same manner, liable to all the consequences. You observe very rightly, that no fair man can believe me to be the author of Junius. Such a supposition might tend, indeed, to raise the estimation of my powers of writing above their just value. Not one of my friends does, upon that flattering principle, give me for the writer; and when my enemies endeavour to fix Junius upon me, it is not for the sake of giving me credit of an able performance. My friends I have satisfied;—my enemies shall never have any direct satisfaction from me. The ministry, I am told, are convinced of my having written Junius, on the authority of a miserable bookseller's preface, which I have read since I saw you, in which there are not three lines of common truth or sense, and which defames me, if possible, with more falsehood and malignity, than the libellers whom they pay for that worthy purpose. This argument of theirs only serves to show how much their malice is superior to their

discernment. For some years, and almost daily, they have been abusing me in the public papers; and (among other pretences for their scurrility) as being the author of the letters in question. I have never once condescended to take the least notice of their invectives, or publicly to deny the fact upon which some of them were grounded. At the same time, to you, or to any of my friends, I have been as ready as I ought to be, in disclaiming, in the most precise terms, writings, that are as superior perhaps to my talents, as they are most certainly different in many essential points from my regards and my principles.—I am, with the greatest truth and affection,

My dear Sir,

Your most obedient and humble servant,

EDM. BURKE.

LETTER 86. EDMUND BURKE TO SIR PHILIP FRANCIS

Very few books have produced such an immediate and profound change in the mass of public opinion as Burke's *Reflections on the French Revolution.* Before the appearance of the book, the average Englishman viewed the revolt with some measure of sympathy mingled with astonishment. Burke's book put a prompt end to this easy attitude. It had an enormous sale. In twelve months it reached the eleventh edition. It split the nation and startled political leaders, not only in England but in France. Burke had sent the proof-sheets of a part of the work to his friend, Sir Philip Francis, who is by many supposed to have been the author of *Junius.* Included in these sheets was the famous passage describing the young French queen at Versailles. Francis wrote urgently protesting against Burke's attitude. He denounced Burke's eloquence on the French queen as "pure foppery", and spoke of her as another Messalina. "The mischief you are going

to do yourself", he wrote, "is, to my apprehension, palpable. I feel it in every sense; and so will you hereafter."

GERARD STREET, *February* 20, 1790.

MY DEAR SIR,—

I sat up rather late at Carlton House, and on my return hither, I found your letter on my table. I have not slept since. You will, therefore, excuse me if you find anything confused, or otherwise expressed than I could wish, in speaking upon a matter which interests you from your regard to me. There are some things in your letter for which I must thank you; there are others which I must answer;—some things bear the mark of friendly admonition; others bear some resemblance to the tone of accusation.

You are the only friend I have who will dare to give me advice; I must, therefore, have something terrible in me, which intimidates all others who know me from giving me the only unequivocal mark of their regard. Whatever this rough and menacing manner may be, I must search myself upon it; and when I discover it, old as I am, I must endeavour to correct it. I flattered myself, however, that you at least would not have thought my other friends justified in withholding from me their services of this kind. You certainly do not always convey to me your opinions with the greatest tenderness and management; and yet I do not recollect, since I first had the pleasure of your acquaintance, that there has been a heat or a coolness of a single day's duration, on my side, during that whole time. I believe your memory cannot present to you an instance of it. I ill deserve friends, if I throw them away on account of the

candour and simplicity of their good nature. In particular you know, that you have in some instances favoured me with your instructions relative to things I was preparing for the public. If I did not in every instance agree with you, I think you had, on the whole, sufficient proofs of my docility, to make you believe that I received your corrections, not only without offence, but with no small degree of gratitude.

Your remarks upon the first two sheets of my Paris letter, relate to the composition and the matter. The composition, you say, is loose, and I am quite sure of it:—I never intended it should be otherwise. For, purporting to be, what in truth it originally was,—a letter to a friend, I had no idea of digesting it in a systematic order. The style is open to correction, and wants it. My natural style of writing is somewhat careless, and I should be happy in receiving your advice towards making it as little vicious as such a style is capable of being made. The general character and colour of a style, which grows out of the writer's peculiar turn of mind and habit of expressing his thoughts, must be attended to in all corrections. It is not the insertion of a piece of stuff, though of a better kind, which is at all times an improvement.

Your main objections are, however, of a much deeper nature, and go to the political opinions and moral sentiments of the piece, in which I find, though with no sort of surprise, having often talked with you on the subject,—that we differ only in everything. You say, "the mischief you are going to do yourself, is to my apprehension palpable; I snuff it in the wind, and my taste

sickens at it". This anticipated stench, that turns your stomach at such a distance, must be nauseous indeed. You seem to think I shall incur great (and not wholly undeserved) infamy, by this publication. This makes it a matter of some delicacy to me, to suppress what I have written; for I must admit in my own feelings, and in that of those who have seen the piece, that my sentiments and opinions deserve the infamy with which they are threatened. If they do not, I know nothing more than that I oppose the prejudices and inclinations of many people. This, I was well aware of from the beginning, and it was in order to oppose those inclinations and prejudices, that I proposed to publish my letter. I really am perfectly astonished how you could dream, with my paper in your hand, that I found no other cause than the beauty of the queen of France (now, I suppose, pretty much faded) for disapproving the conduct which has been held towards her, and for expressing my own particular feelings. I am not to order the natural sympathies of my own heart, and of every honest breast, to wait until all the jokes and all the anecdotes of the coffee-houses of Paris and of the dissenting meeting-houses of London, are scoured of all the slander of those who calumniate persons, that, afterwards, they may murder them with impunity. I know nothing of your story of Messalina. Am I obliged to prove juridically the virtues of all those I shall see suffering every kind of wrong, and contumely, and risk of life, before I endeavour to interest others in their sufferings—and before I endeavour to excite horror against midnight assassins at backstairs, and their more wicked abettors in pulpits? What!—Are not high

rank, great splendour of descent, great personal elegance and outward accomplishments, ingredients of moment in forming the interest we take in the misfortunes of men? The minds of those who do not feel thus, are not even systematically right. "What's Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba, that he should weep for her?"—Why,—because she was Hecuba, the queen of Troy—the wife of Priam,—and suffered, in the close of life, a thousand calamities! I felt too for Hecuba, when I read the fine tragedy of Euripides upon her story; and I never enquired into the anecdotes of the court or city of Troy, before I gave way to the sentiments which the author wished to inspire;—nor do I remember that he ever said one word of her virtue. It is for those who applaud or palliate assassination, regicide, and base insult to women of illustrious place, to prove the crimes (in sufferings) which they allege, to justify their own. But if they have proved fornication on any such woman, —taking the manners of the world, and the manners of France,—I shall never put it in a parallel with assassination!—No: I have no such inverted scale of faults in my heart or my head.

You find it perfectly ridiculous, and unfit for me in particular, to take these things as my ingredients of commiseration. Pray why is it absurd in me to think, that the chivalrous spirit which dictated a veneration for women of condition and of beauty, without any consideration whatever of enjoying them, was the great source of those manners which have been the pride and ornament of Europe for so many ages? And am I not to lament that I have lived to see those manners extinguished in so shocking a manner, by means of speculation of

finance, and the false science of a sordid and degenerate philosophy? I tell you again,—that the recollection of the manner in which I saw the queen of France, in the year 1774, and the contrast between that brilliancy, splendour, and beauty, with the prostrate homage of a nation to her,—and the abominable scene of 1789, which I was describing,—*did* draw tears from me and wetted my paper. These tears came again into my eyes, almost as often as I looked at the description;—they may again. You do not believe this fact, nor that these are my real feelings; but that the whole is affected, or, as you express it, downright foppery. My friend,—I tell you it is truth; and that it is true, and will be truth, when you and I are no more; and will exist as long as men with their natural feelings shall exist. I shall say no more on this foppery of mine. Oh! by the way, you ask me how long I have been an admirer of German ladies? Always the same. Present me the idea of such massacres about any German lady here, and such attempts to assassinate her, and such a triumphant procession from Windsor to the Old Jewry, and I assure you, I shall be quite as full of natural concern and just indignation.

As to the other points, they deserve serious consideration, and they shall have it. I certainly cannot profit quite so much by your assistance, as if we agreed. In that case, every correction would be forwarding the design. We should work with one common view.

But it is impossible that any man can correct a work according to its true spirit, who is opposed to its object, or can help the expression of what he thinks should not be expressed at all.

I should agree with you about the vileness of the controversy with such miscreants as the "Revolution Society", and the "National Assembly"; and I know very well that they, as well as their allies, the Indian delinquents, will darken the air with their arrows. But I do not yet think they have the advowson of reputation. I shall try that point. My dear Sir, you think of nothing but controversies: "I challenge into the field a battle, and retire defeated, etc." If their having the last word be a defeat, they most assuredly will defeat me. But I intend no controversy with Dr. Price, or Lord Shelburne, or any other of their set. I mean to set in full view the danger from their wicked principles and their black hearts. I intend to state the true principles of our constitution in church and state, upon grounds opposite to theirs. If any one be the better for the example made of them, and for this exposition, well and good. I mean to do my best to expose them to the hatred, ridicule, and contempt of the whole world; as I always shall expose such calumniators, hypocrites, sowers of sedition, and approvers of murder and all its triumphs. When I have done that, they may have the field to themselves; and I care very little how they triumph over me, since I hope they will not be able to draw me at their heels, and carry my head in triumph on their poles.

I have been interrupted, and have said enough. Adieu! believe me always sensible of your friendship; though it is impossible that a greater difference can exist on earth than, unfortunately for me, there is on those subjects, between your sentiments and mine.

EDM. BURKE.

WILLIAM COWPER

1731–1800

Cowper went to school at Westminster, where he had Warren Hastings among his companions. At eighteen he was articled to an attorney, and later was called to the Bar. But he had little interest in law, and occupied most of his time in chambers by writing verses and contributing to a magazine. His companions were men of letters and journalists. He was a member of the Nonsense Club, formed by seven Westminster men who dined together once a week. At the age of thirty-two he was, by the influence of his kinsman, Major Cowper, appointed Clerk of the Journals to the House of Lords. The office appeared entirely suitable, and would have made him comfortable for life; but the appointment had a melancholy effect. He conceived that he had been sinful in longing for it: he feared opposition, and fancied he would have to undergo a severe examination. The seeds of insanity showed themselves. After poring over the Journals for some months he became quite mad. After a period in a private asylum he recovered; but the appointment was given up, and he determined to withdraw himself from society and the business of the world. His relatives provided him with a small income, and he went to live in retirement at Huntingdon, to be near his brother in Cambridge. At Huntingdon he formed the intimacy with the Unwin family, in whose house, at the close of the year 1765, he took up his abode.

Letter 87. William Cowper to Joseph Hill

Cowper's letters are, of all letters in English literature, the nearest perfection. Mr. Herbert Paul has not gone too far in styling them "the glory of the English language". They are full of humour, and at the same time touched with tenderness; always speaking the language of sense, piety, and a refined simplicity. One remarkable feature is that their themes are generally quite ordinary; and they are written from quiet, almost dull, places. The two following familiar letters to his friend Joseph Hill are excellent examples of Cowper's easy and often whimsical style. Hill was a lawyer, and one of the humbler members of the Nonsense Club. His literary tastes and love of fun were combined with solid char-

acter. He was Cowper's man of business: a stanch and considerate friend.

HUNTINGDON, *July* 3, 1765.

DEAR JOE,—

Whatever you may think of the matter, it is no such easy thing to keep house for two people. A man cannot always live upon sheep's heads, and liver and lights, like the lions in the Tower; and a joint of meat, in so small a family, is an endless encumbrance. My butcher's bill for last week amounted to four shillings and tenpence. I set off with a leg of lamb, and was forced to give part of it away to my washerwoman. Then I made an experiment upon a sheep's heart, and that was too little. Next I put three pounds of beef into a pie, and this had like to have been too much, for it lasted three days, though my landlord was admitted to a share in it. Then as to small beer, I am puzzled to pieces about it. I have bought as much for a shilling as will serve us at least a month, and it is grown sour already. In short, I never knew how to pity poor housekeepers before; but now I cease to wonder at that politic cast which their occupation usually gives to their countenance, for it is really a matter full of perplexity.

I have received but one visit since here I came. I don't mean that I have refused any, but that only one has been offered. This was from my woollen-draper; a very healthy, wealthy, sensible, sponsible man, and extremely civil. He has a cold bath, and has promised me a key of it, which I shall probably make use of in the winter. He has undertaken, too, to get me the *St. James's Chronicle* three times a-week, and to show me Hinchinbrook House, and

to do every service for me in his power; so that I did not exceed the truth, you see, when I spoke of his civility. Here is a card-assembly, and a dancing-assembly, and a horse-race, and a club, and a bowling-green, so that I am well off, you perceive, in point of diversions; especially as I shall go to 'em just as much as I should if I lived a thousand miles off. But no matter for that; the spectator at a play is more entertained than the actor; and in real life it is much the same. You will say, perhaps, that if I never frequent these places, I shall not come within the description of a spectator; and you will say right. I have made a blunder, which shall be corrected in the next edition.

You are an old dog at a bad tenant; witness all my uncle's and your mother's geese and gridirons. There is something so extremely impertinent in entering upon a man's premises, and using them without paying for 'em, that I could easily resent it if I would. But I rather choose to entertain myself with thinking how you will scour the man about, and worry him to death, if once you begin with him. Poor toad! I leave him entirely to your mercy.

My dear Joe, you desire me to write long letters —I have neither matter enough, nor perseverance enough for the purpose. However, if you can but contrive to be tired of reading as soon as I am tired of writing, we shall find that short ones answer just as well; and, in my opinion, this is a very practicable measure.

My friend Colman has had good fortune; I wish him better fortune still; which is, that he may make a right use of it. The tragedies of Lloyd and Bensley are both very deep. If they are not

of use to the surviving part of society, it is their own fault.

I was debtor to Bensley seven pounds, or nine, I forget which. If you can find out his brother, you will do me a great favour, if you will pay him for me; but do it at your leisure.

Yours and theirs,

W. C.

Letter 88. William Cowper to Joseph Hill

On the death of Mr. Unwin in 1767, Mrs. Unwin and Cowper moved to Olney, attracted thither by the presence of the Rev. John Newton, an ardent evangelical. He found a house for them next his own, and a private door was opened between the two gardens. Cowper came quite under the spell of Newton's stern piety. His life became a round of religious meetings and sick-visiting. He had scarcely any books, and his sole literary occupation was the composition of hymns. A period of insanity recurred in 1773. On his recovery, Cowper took to gardening, drawing, and rearing hares. Fortunately in 1778 Newton was offered a London living and removed from Olney. This letter to Hill shows that Cowper had already begun to read more widely. It also illustrates his delight at receiving from any thoughtful friend a parcel of fish.

[Olney], *April—I fancy the 20th*, 1777.

My dear Friend,—

Thanks for a turbot, a lobster, and Captain Brydone: a gentleman who relates his travels so agreeably, that he deserves always to travel with an agreeable companion. I have been reading Gray's Works, and think him the only poet since Shakespeare entitled to the character of sublime. Perhaps you will remember that I once had a different opinion of him. I was prejudiced. He

did not belong to our Thursday society, and was an Eton man, which lowered him prodigiously in our esteem. I once thought Swift's letters the best that could be written; but I like Gray's better. His humour, or his wit, or whatever it is to be called, is never ill-natured or offensive, and yet, I think equally poignant with the Dean's.

I am yours affectionately,

WM. COWPER.

LETTER 89. WILLIAM COWPER TO WILLIAM UNWIN

The Rev. William Unwin, the son of Mary Unwin, was one of Cowper's best correspondents, being of a more genial temperament than John Newton. To him Cowper writes with the frankness of a brother. This letter shows how cheerful now was the atmosphere of the Olney home. Cowper's intellectual powers were once more working freely, and he was ranging without restraint through the fields of literature.

[OLNEY], *October* 31, 1779.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—

I wrote my last letter merely to inform you that I had nothing to say; in answer to which you have said nothing. I admire the propriety of your conduct though I am a loser by it. I will endeavour to say something now, and shall hope for something in return.

I have been well entertained with Johnson's biography, for which I thank you: with one exception, and that a swingeing one, I think he has acquitted himself with his usual good sense and sufficiency. His treatment of Milton is unmerciful to the last degree. A pensioner is not likely to spare a re-

publican; and the Doctor, in order, I suppose, to convince his royal patron of the sincerity of his monarchical principles, has belaboured that great poet's character with the most industrious cruelty. As a man, he has hardly left him the shadow of one good quality. Churlishness in his private life, and a rancorous hatred of everything royal in his public, are the two colours with which he has smeared all the canvas. If he had any virtues, they are not to be found in the Doctor's picture of him; and it is well for Milton, that some sourness in his temper is the only vice with which his memory has been charged; it is evident enough that if his biographer could have discovered more, he would not have spared him. As a poet, he has treated him with severity enough, and has plucked one or two of the most beautiful feathers out of his Muse's wing, and trampled them under his great foot. He has passed sentence of condemnation upon Lycidas, and has taken occasion, from that charming poem, to expose to ridicule (what is indeed ridiculous enough), the childish prattlement of pastoral compositions, as if Lycidas was the prototype and pattern of them all. The liveliness of the description, the sweetness of the numbers, the classical spirit of antiquity that prevails in it, go for nothing. I am convinced, by the way, that he has no ear for poetical numbers, or that it was stopped by prejudice against the harmony of Milton's. Was there ever anything so delightful as the music of the Paradise Lost? It is like that of a fine organ; has the fullest and the deepest tones of majesty, with all the softness and elegance of the Dorian flute: variety without end, and never equalled, unless perhaps by Virgil. Yet the Doctor

has little or nothing to say upon this copious theme, but talks something about the unfitness of the English language for blank verse, and how apt it is, in the mouth of some readers, to degenerate into declamation. Oh! I could thrash his old jacket till I made his pension jingle in his pockets.

I could talk a good while longer, but I have no room. Our love attends yourself, Mrs. Unwin, and Miss Shuttleworth, not forgetting the two miniature pictures at your elbow.

Yours affectionately,

W. C.

Letter 90. William Cowper to William Unwin

Cowper had now begun to be busy with the many quiet pursuits which henceforth, for the greater part of his life, filled up his daily round. He worked in the garden and he sketched. He began to try his hand at verses. In this he was encouraged by Mrs. Unwin, who set him to work on a "Moral Satire", *The Progress of Error*, and gave him as additional themes *Truth*, *Charity*, and the like. These efforts were collected into a volume in 1782.

August 6, 1780.

My dear Friend,—

You like to hear from me: this is a very good reason why I should write. But I have nothing to say; this seems equally a good reason why I should not. Yet, if you had alighted from your horse at our door this morning, and at this present writing, being five o'clock in the afternoon, had found occasion to say to me,—"Mr. Cowper, you have not spoken since I came in; have you

resolved never to speak again?" it would be but a poor reply, if, in answer to the summons, I should plead inability as my best and only excuse. And this, by the way, suggests to me a seasonable piece of instruction, and reminds me of what I am very apt to forget, when I have any epistolary business in hand, that a letter may be written upon anything or nothing, just as anything or nothing happens to occur. A man that has a journey before him, twenty miles in length, which he is to perform on foot, will not hesitate and doubt whether he shall set out or not, because he does not readily conceive how he shall ever reach the end of it; for he knows, that by the simple operation of moving one foot forward first, and then the other, he shall be sure to accomplish it. So it is in the present case, and so it is in every similar case. A letter is written as a conversation is maintained, or a journey performed; not by preconcerted, or premeditated means, a new contrivance, or an invention never heard of before,—but merely by maintaining a progress, and resolving as a postilion does, having once set out, never to stop till we reach the appointed end. If a man may talk without thinking, why may he not write upon the same terms? A grave gentleman of the last century, a tie-wig, square-toe, Steinkirk figure, would say, "My good sir, a man has no right to do either". But it is to be hoped that the present century has nothing to do with the mouldy opinions of the last; and so, good Sir Launcelot, or Sir Paul, or whatever be your name, step into your picture-frame again, and look as if you thought for another century, and leave us moderns, in the meantime, to think when we can, and to write whether we

can or not, else we might as well be dead, as you are. . . .

W. C.

Letter 91. William Cowper to John Newton

John Newton was now settled in London. His place as curate of Olney had been taken by Thomas Scott, the author of the *Commentary on the Bible*, a man similar in theology and in disposition. Cowper, however, was not attracted by him. He did not like his scolding tone in the pulpit. Newton's place in Cowper's spiritual life was taken by the Rev. William Bull, to whom he became greatly attached, addressing him affectionately as *Carissime Taurorum*. This letter exhibits Cowper quite at his ease with Newton. It is one of several letters in verse, which show how nimbly he could trundle the hoop of rhyme.

[Olney], *July* 12, 1781.

My very dear Friend,—

I am going to send what, when you have read, you may scratch your head, and say, I suppose, there's nobody knows whether what I have got, be verse or not; by the tune and the time, it ought to be rhyme; but if it be, did you ever see, of late or of yore, such a ditty before? The thought did occur, to me and to her, as madam and I, did walk and not fly, over the hills and dales, with spreading sails, before it was dark to Weston Park.

The news at *Oney* is little or noney; but such as it is, I send it, viz.: Poor Mr. Peace cannot yet cease, addling his head with what you said, and has left parish-church quite in the lurch, having almost swore to go there no more.

Page and his wife, that made such a strife, we met them twain in Dog-lane; we gave them the

wall, and that was all. For Mr. Scott, we have seen him not, except as he pass'd, in a wonderful haste, to see a friend in Silver End. Mrs. Jones proposes ere July closes, that she and her sister, and her Jones mister, and we that are here, our course shall steer, to dine in the Spinney; but for a guinea, if the weather should hold, so hot and so cold, we had better by far, stay where we are. For the grass there grows, while nobody mows (which is very wrong), so rank and long, that so to speak, 'tis at least a week, if it happens to rain, ere it dries again.

I have writ Charity, not for popularity, but as well as I could, in hopes to do good; and if the Reviewer should say "to be sure, the gentleman's Muse, wears Methodist shoes; you may know by her pace, and talk about grace, that she and her bard have little regard, for the taste and fashions, and ruling passions, and hoidening play, of the modern day; and though she assume a borrowed plume, and here and there wear a tittering air, 'tis only her plan, to catch if she can, the giddy and gay, as they go that way, by a production, on a new construction. She has baited her trap in hopes to snap all that may come, with a sugar plum".

—— His opinion in this, will not be amiss; 'tis what I intend, my principal end; and if I succeed, and folks should read, till a few are brought to a serious thought, I shall think I am paid, for all I have said and all I have done, though I have run, many a time, after a rhyme, as far as from hence, to the end of my sense, and by hook or crook, write another book, if I live and am here, another year. I have heard before, of a room with

a floor, laid upon springs, and such like things, with so much art, in every part, that when you went in, you was forced to begin a minuet pace, with an air and a grace, swimming about, now in and now out, with a deal of state, in a figure of eight, without pipe or string, or any such thing; and now I have writ, in a rhyming fit, what will make you dance, and as you advance, will keep you still, though against your will, dancing away, alert and gay, till you come to an end of what I have penn'd; which that you may do, ere madam and you are quite worn out with jigging about, I take my leave, and here you receive a vow profound, down to the ground, from your humble me,

W. C.

P.S.—When I concluded, doubtless you did think me right, as well you might, in saying what I said of Scott; and then it was true, but now it is due to him to note that, since I wrote, himself and he has visited we.

Letter 92. William Cowper to William Unwin

In the summer of 1781 Lady Austen, visiting her sister near Olney, became attached to Cowper and Mrs. Unwin. Quarters were found for her at the vicarage, and the door between the two gardens was reopened. She was a clever, sparkling, warm-hearted woman, and for over two years a charming literary stimulus to the sedentary poet. "From a scene of the most uninterrupted retirement", he writes to Unwin (Jan., 1783), "we have passed at once into a state of constant engagement; not that our society is much multiplied—the addition of an individual has made all this difference." Lady Austen told Cowper the story of *John Gilpin*; set him to work on *The Task*; and quickened his literary zest.

[Olney,] *March* 21, 1784.

My dear William,—

I thank you for the entertainment you have afforded me. I often wish for a library; often regret my folly in selling a good collection; but I have one in Essex. . . . Last night I made an end of reading Johnson's Prefaces; but the number of poets whom he has vouchsafed to chronicle being fifty-six, there must be many with whose history I am not yet acquainted. These, or some of these, if it suits you to give them a part of your chaise, when you come, will be heartily welcome. I am very much the biographer's humble admirer. His uncommon share of good sense, and his forcible expression, secure to him that tribute from all his readers. He has a penetrating insight into character, and a happy talent of correcting the popular opinion, upon all occasions where it is erroneous; and this he does with the boldness of a man who will think for himself, but, at the same time, with a justnesss of sentiment that convinces us he does not differ from others through affectation, but because he has a sounder judgment. This remark, however, has his narrative for its object, rather than his critical performance. In the latter, I do not think him always just, when he departs from the general opinion. He finds no beauties in Milton's *Lycidas*. He pours contempt upon Prior, to such a degree, that were he really as undeserving of notice as he represents him, he ought no longer to be numbered among the poets. These, indeed, are the two capital instances in which he has offended me. There are others less important, which I have not room to enumerate, and in which I am less confident that he is wrong. What sug-

gested to him the thought that the *Alma* was written in imitation of *Hudibras*, I cannot conceive. In former years, they were both favourites of mine, and I often read them; but never saw in them the least resemblance to each other; nor do I now, except that they are composed in verse of the same measure. After all, it is a melancholy observation, which it is impossible not to make, after having run through this series of poetical lives, that where there were such shining talents, there should be so little virtue. These luminaries of our country seem to have been kindled into a brighter blaze than others, only that their spots might be more noticed! So much can nature do for our intellectual part, and so little for our moral. What vanity, what petulance in Pope! How painfully sensible of censure, and yet how restless in provocation! To what mean artifices could Addison stoop, in hopes of injuring the reputation of his friend! Savage, how sordidly vicious, and the more condemned for the pains that are taken to palliate his vices. Offensive as they appear through a veil, how would they disgust without one. What a sycophant to the public taste was Dryden; sinning against his feelings, lewd in his writings, though chaste in his conversation. I know not but one might search these eight volumes with a candle, as the prophet says, to find a man, and not find one, unless, perhaps, Arbuthnot were he.

I shall begin Beattie this evening, and propose to myself much satisfaction in reading him. . . . He, too, is a poet, and wrote the *Minstrel*. The specimen which I have seen of it pleased me much. If you have the whole, I should be glad to read it. I may, perhaps, since you allow me the liberty,

indulge myself here and there with a marginal annotation, but shall not use that allowance wantonly so as to deface the volumes.

Your mother wishes you to buy for her ten yards and a half of yard-wide Irish, from two shillings to two shillings and sixpence per yard; and my head will be equally obliged to you for a hat, of which I enclose a string that gives you the circumference. The depth of the crown must be four inches and one-eighth. Let it not be a round slouch, which I abhor, but a smart, well-cocked fashionable affair. A fashionable hat likewise for your mother; a black one if they are worn; otherwise chip.

Yours, my dear William,

W. C.

Letter 93. William Cowper to Lady Hesketh

In 1780, urged by Mrs. Unwin, Cowper wrote his first satire; in 1782 appeared his first acknowledged *Poems*, including *Table Talk*. *The Task* came out in 1785. For Lady Austen's influence in this, the English world must ever be her debtor. It marks a distinct stage in the growth of our poetry, "by setting the example of simplicity and nature, by choosing very simple subjects, and by adopting a fluent and familiar versification" (Scherer). In Southey's judgment, "had it not been for Mrs. Unwin, Cowper would probably never have appeared in his own person as an author; had it not been for Lady Austen, he would never have been a popular one". But long before *The Task* came out, Lady Austen was estranged from the Olney circle. Apparently, in the phrase of Sainte-Beuve, "the charming fairy brought into their ordinary intercourse an element of too keen sensitiveness, or may be of touchiness". Perhaps even the gentle Mary Unwin grew jealous. At any rate, the day came when Cowper had to make his choice between the old and the new friend. It is plain that he felt acute distress; it is equally plain that he did not hesitate. To

his sympathetic cousin, Lady Hesketh, a most lovable woman, to whom he was strongly attached, he tells the tale without too great reserve. The intimacy of his friendship with Lady Hesketh is shown by his divulging to her (Nov., 1785) his project of translating Homer. He tells it as a great secret "that you must not whisper even to your cat. No creature is at this moment apprised of it, but Mrs. Unwin and her son."

[Olney,] *Jan.* 16, 1786.

My Dearest Cousin,—

. . . Occasionally I am much distressed, but that distress becomes continually less frequent, and I think less violent. I find writing, and especially poetry, my best remedy. Perhaps, had I understood music, I had never written verse, but had lived upon fiddle-strings instead. It is better, however, as it is. A poet may, if he pleases, be of a little use in the world, while a musician, the most skilful, can only divert himself and a few others. I have been emerging gradually from this pit. As soon as I became capable of action, I commenced carpenter, made cupboards, boxes, stools. I grew weary of this in about a twelvemonth, and addressed myself to the making of birdcages. To this employment succeeded that of gardening, which I intermingled with that of drawing, but finding that the latter occupation injured my eyes, I renounced it, and commenced poet. I have given you, my dear, a little history in shorthand; I know that it will touch your feelings, but do not let it interest them too much. *In the year when I wrote "The Task"* (for it occupied me about a year), *I was very often most supremely unhappy*, and am under God indebted in good part to that work for not having been much worse. You did not know what a clever fellow I am, and how I can turn my hand to anything.

I perceive that this time I shall make you pay double postage, and there is no help for it. Unless I write myself out now, I shall forget half of what I have to say. Now therefore for the interruptions at which I hinted.

There came a lady into this country, by name and title, Lady Austen, the widow of the late Sir Robert Austen. At first she lived with her sister, about a mile from Olney; but in a few weeks took lodgings at the vicarage here. Between the vicarage and the back of our house are interposed our gardens, an orchard, and the garden belonging to the vicarage. She had lived much in France, was very sensible, and had infinite vivacity. She took a great liking to us, as we to her. She had been used to a great deal of company; and we, fearing that she would find such a transition into silent retirement irksome, contrived to give her our agreeable company often. Become continually more and more intimate, a practice obtained at length of our dining with each other alternately, every day, Sunday excepted. In order to facilitate our communication, we made doors in the two garden walls abovesaid, by which means we considerably shortened the way from one house to the other; and could meet when we pleased, without entering the town at all; a measure the rather expedient, because the town is abominably dirty, and she kept no carriage. On her first settlement in our neighbourhood, I made it my own particular business (for at that time I was not employed in writing, having published my first volume, and not begun my second) to pay my devoirs to her ladyship every morning at eleven. Customs very soon became laws. I began the *Task*; for she was the lady who

gave me the sofa for the subject. Being once engaged in the work, I began to feel the inconvenience of my morning attendance. We had seldom breakfast ourselves until ten, and the intervening hour was all the time that I could find in the whole day for writing; and occasionally it would happen that the half of that hour was all that I could secure for the purpose. But there was no remedy. Long usage had made that which at first was optional, a point of good manners, and consequently of necessity, and I was forced to neglect the *Task* to attend upon the Muse who had inspired the subject. But she had ill health, and before I had quite finished the work was obliged to repair to Bristol. Thus, as I told you, my dear, the cause of the many interruptions that I mentioned was removed, and now, except the Bull that I spoke of, we have seldom any company at all. After all that I have said upon the matter, you will not completely understand me, perhaps, unless I account for the remainder of the day. I will add, therefore, that, having paid my morning visit, I walked; returning from the walk, I dressed: we then met and dined, and parted not till between ten and eleven at night!

The little item that you inserted in your cover, concerning a review of a certain author's work, in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, excited Mrs. Unwin's curiosity to see it in a moment. In vain did I expostulate with her on the vanity of all things here below, especially of human praise, telling her what perhaps indeed she had heard before, but what on such an occasion I thought it not amiss to remind her of, that at the best it is but as the idle wind that whistles as it passes by, and that a little attention to the dictates of reason would presently give

her the victory over all the curiosity that she felt so troublesome. For a short time, indeed, I prevailed, but the next day the fit returned upon her with more violence than before. She would see it,—she was resolved that she would see it that moment. You must know, my dear, that a watchmaker lives within two or three doors of us, who takes in the said *Magazine* for a gentleman at some distance, and as it happened it had not been sent to its proper owner. Accordingly the messenger that the lady dispatched, returned with it, and she was gratified. As to myself, I read the article indeed, and read it to her; but I do not concern myself much you may suppose about such matters, and shall only make two or three cursory remarks, and so conclude. In the first place, therefore, I observe that it is enough to craze a poor poet to see his verses so miserably misprinted, and which is worse, if possible, his very praises in a manner annihilated, by a jumble of the lines out of their places, so that in two instances, the end of the period takes the lead of the beginning of it. The said poet has still the more reason to be crazed, because the said *Magazine* is in general singularly correct. But at Christmas, no doubt, your printer will get drunk as well as another man. It is astonishing to me that they know so exactly how much I translated of Voltaire. My recollection refreshed by them tells me that they are right in the number of the books that they affirm to have been translated by me, but till they brought the fact again to my mind, I myself had forgotten that part of the business entirely. My brother had twenty guineas for eight books of English *Henriade*, and I furnished him with four of them.

They are not equally accurate in the affair of the Tame Mouse. That I kept one is certain, and that I kept it as they say, in my bureau,—but not in the Temple. It was while I was at Westminster. I kept it till it produced six young ones, and my transports when I first discovered them cannot easily be conceived,—any more than my mortification, when going again to visit my little family, I found that the mouse herself had eaten them! I turned her loose, in indignation, and vowed never to keep a mouse again. Who the writer of this article can be I am not able to imagine, nor where he had his information of these particulars. But they know all the world and everything that belongs to it. . . .

Adieu, my dear Cousin; I intended that one of these should have served as a case for the other, but before I was aware of it, I filled both sheets completely. However, as your money burns in your pocket, there is no harm done. I shall not add a syllable more except that I am and, while I breathe, ever shall be most truly yours,

Wm. Cowper.

Yes; one syllable more. Having just finished the *Iliad*, I was determined to have a deal of talk with you.

Letter 94. William Cowper to Lady Hesketh

Lady Hesketh was sister of Theodora, whom in his young days Cowper would have married but for the opposition of her father, Ashley Cowper. On the publication of *The Task*, the two ladies renewed their interest in their cousin. Lady Hes-

keth visited Olney and induced Cowper to move to pleasanter quarters. A house ("The Lodge") was rented at Weston Underwood, some two miles off, from his friends the Throckmortons, whom he styled playfully Mr. and Mrs. Frog.

THE LODGE, *July* 28, 1788.

It is in vain that you tell me you have no talent at description, while in fact you describe better than anybody. You have given me a most complete idea of your mansion and its situation; and I doubt not that with your letter in my hand by way of map, could I be set down on the spot in a moment, I should find myself qualified to take my walks and my pastime in whatever quarter of your paradise it should please me the most to visit. We also, as you know, have scenes at Weston worthy of description; but because you know them well, I will only say that one of them has, within these few days, been much improved; I mean the lime walk. By the help of the axe and the woodbill which have of late been constantly employed in cutting out all straggling branches that intercepted the arch, Mr. Throckmorton has now defined it with such exactness, that no cathedral in the world can show one of more magnificence or beauty. . . .

Have you seen the account of five hundred celebrated authors now living? I am one of them; but stand charged with the high crime and misdemeanour of totally neglecting method; an accusation which, if the gentleman would take the pains to read me, he would find sufficiently refuted. I am conscious at least of having laboured much in the arrangement of my matter, and of having given to the several parts of my book of *The Task*, as well as to each poem in the first volume, that sort

of slight connexion which poetry demands; for in poetry (except professedly of the didactic kind) a logical precision would be stiff, pedantic, and ridiculous. But there is no pleasing some critics; the comfort is, that I am contented, whether they be pleased or not. At the same time, to my honour be it spoken, the chronicler of us five hundred prodigies bestows on me, for aught I know, more commendations than on any other of my confraternity. May he live to write the histories of as many thousand poets, and find me the very best among them! Amen! . . .

Ever thine,

W. C.

Letter 95. William Cowper to Samuel Rose

Samuel Rose, the son of a schoolmaster at Chiswick, came, a student of twenty, on a pilgrimage to Olney. He brought from Glasgow University the greetings of some professors. Also he carried a copy of Burns's newly published poems, which charmed Cowper in spite of what he called their "barbarism". Rose won Cowper's heart, and became a welcome visitor.

The Lodge, *June* 5, 1789.

My dear Friend,—

I am going to give you a deal of trouble, but London folks must be content to be troubled by country folks; for in London only can our strange necessities be supplied. You must buy for me, if you please, a cuckoo-clock; and now I will tell you where they are sold, which, Londoner as you are, it is possible you may not know. They are sold, I am informed, at more houses than one, in that narrow part of Holborn which

leads into Broad St. Giles'. It seems they are well-going clocks, and cheap, which are the two best recommendations of any clock. They are made in Germany, and such numbers of them are annually imported, that they are become even a considerable article of commerce.

I return you many thanks for Boswell's *Tour*. I read it to Mrs. Unwin after supper, and we find it amusing. There is much trash in it, as there must always be in every narrative that relates indiscriminately all that passed. But now and then the Doctor speaks like an oracle, and that makes amends for all. Sir John was a coxcomb, and Boswell is not less a coxcomb, though of another kind. I fancy Johnson made coxcombs of all his friends, and they in return made him a coxcomb; for, with reverence be it spoken, such he certainly was, and, flattered as he was, he was sure to be so.

Thanks for your invitation to London, but unless London can come to me, I fear we shall never meet. I was sure that you would love my friend, when you should once be well acquainted with him; and equally sure that he would take kindly to you.

Now for Homer. W. C.

Letter 96. William Cowper to Mrs. Anne Bodham

In 1790 Cowper was visited by another young man, a relative on his mother's side. This was John Johnson—"Johnny of Norfolk"—a grandson of Roger Donne, Cowper's maternal uncle. Johnson, an undergraduate at Cambridge, won the poet's heart, and gave him keen pleasure by bringing tidings of his mother's relations. An aunt of this John was Mrs. Bodham (Anne Donne), a cousin and early playmate of Cowper's. Hearing from John of her old friend's delight in getting news of his mother's people, she sent from Norfolk, with an affec-

tionate letter, the picture made famous by the inscription of the exquisite lines on his mother's portrait.

WESTON, *February* 27, 1790.

MY DEAREST ROSE,—

Whom I thought withered, and fallen from the stalk, but whom I still find alive: nothing could give me greater pleasure than to know it, and to learn it from yourself. I loved you dearly when you were a child, and love you not a jot the less for having ceased to be so. Every creature that bears any affinity to my mother is dear to me, and you, the daughter of her brother, are but one remove distant from her: I love you, therefore, and love you much, both for her sake, and for your own. The world could not have furnished you with a present so acceptable to me, as the picture which you have so kindly sent me. I received it the night before last, and viewed it with a trepidation of nerves and spirits somewhat akin to what I should have felt, had the dear original presented herself to my embraces. I kissed it, and hung it where it is the last object that I see at night, and, of course, the first on which I open my eyes in the morning. She died when I completed my sixth year; yet I remember her well, and am an ocular witness of the great fidelity of the copy. I remember, too, a multitude of the maternal tendernesses which I received from her, and which have endeared her memory to me beyond expression. There is in me, I believe, more of the Donne than of the Cowper; and though I love all of both names, and have a thousand reasons to love those of my own name, yet I feel the bond of nature draw me vehemently to your side. I was thought

in the days of my childhood much to resemble my mother; and in my natural temper, of which at the age of fifty-eight I must be supposed to be a competent judge, can trace both her, and my late uncle, your father. Somewhat of his irritability; and a little, I would hope, both of his and of her——, I know not what to call it, without seeming to praise myself, which is not my intention, but speaking to *you*, I will even speak out, and say *good nature*. Add to all this, I deal much in poetry, as did our venerable ancestor, the Dean of St. Paul's, and I think I shall have proved myself a Donne at all points. The truth is, that whatever I am, I love you all.

I account it a happy event that brought the dear boy, your nephew, to my knowledge; and that breaking through all the restraints which his natural bashfulness imposed on him, he determined to find me out. He is amiable to a degree that I have seldom seen, and I often long with impatience to see him again.

My dearest Cousin, what shall I say to you in answer to your affectionate invitation? I *must* say this: I cannot come now, nor soon, and I wish with all my heart I could. But I will tell you what may be done, perhaps, and it will answer to us just as well: you and Mr. Bodham can come to Weston, can you not? The summer is at hand, there are roads and wheels to bring you, and you are neither of you translating Homer. I am crazed that I cannot ask you all together, for want of house-room; but for Mr. Bodham and yourself we have good room; and equally good for any third, in the shape of a Donne, whether named Hewitt, Bodham, Balls, or Johnson, or by whatever name

distinguished. Mrs. Hewitt has particular claims upon me; she was my playfellow at Berkhamstead, and has a share in my warmest affections. Pray tell her so! Neither do I at all forget my Cousin Harriet. She and I have been many a time merry at Catfield, and have made the parsonage ring with laughter. Give my love to her. Assure yourself, my dearest Cousin, that I shall receive you as if you were my sister, and Mrs. Unwin is, for my sake, prepared to do the same. When she has seen you, she will love you for your own.

I am much obliged to Mr. Bodham for his kindness to my Homer, and with my love to you all, and with Mrs. Unwin's kind respects, am, my dear, dear Rose, ever yours, W. C.

P.S.—I mourn the death of your poor brother Castres, whom I should have seen had he lived, and should have seen with the greatest pleasure. He was an amiable boy, and I was very fond of him.

Still another P.S.—I find on consulting Mrs. Unwin, that I have underrated our capabilities, and that we have not only room for you and Mr. Bodham, but for two of your sex, and even for your nephew into the bargain. We shall be happy to have it all so occupied.

Your nephew tells me that his sister, in the qualities of the mind, resembles you; that is enough to make her dear to me, and I beg you will assure her that she is so. Let it not be long before I hear from you.

Letter 97. William Cowper to Lady Hesketh

Cowper's *Homer* made its appearance in the summer of 1791. His friends and admirers had been busy securing subscribers. In February of this year, writing to "Johnny of Norfolk", Cowper notes with complacence "all the Scotch universities have subscribed, none excepted". The calls upon Horace Walpole referred to in this letter were probably made to secure the support of a name so influential. There were about five hundred subscribers.

[Weston,] *Friday night, March* 25, 1791.

My Dearest Coz,—

Johnson writes me word that he has repeatedly called on Horace Walpole, and has never found him at home. He has also written to him, and received no answer. I charge thee therefore on thy allegiance, that thou move not a finger more in this business. My back is up, and I cannot bear the thought of wooing him any further, nor would do it, though he were as *pig* a gentleman (look you!) as Lucifer himself. I have Welsh blood in me, if the pedigree of the Donnes say true, and every drop of it says—"Let him alone!"

I should have dined at the Hall to-day, having engaged myself to do so; but an untoward occurrence, that happened last night, or rather this morning, prevented me. It was a thundering rap at the door, just after the clock struck three. First, I thought the house was on fire. Then I thought the Hall was on fire. Then I thought it was a housebreaker's trick. Then I thought it was an express. In any case I thought that if it should be repeated, it would awaken and terrify Mrs.

Unwin, and kill her with spasms. The consequence of all these thoughts was the worst nervous fever I ever had in my life, although it was the shortest. The rap was given but once, though a multifarious one. Had I heard a second, I should have risen myself at all adventures. It was the only minute since you went, in which I have been glad that you were not here. Soon after I came down, I learned that a drunken party had passed through the village at that time, and they were no doubt the authors of this witty, but troublesome invention. . . .—Adieu, my dearest Coz.

W. C.

Letter 98. William Cowper to Mrs. Courtenay

On completing his *Homer*, Cowper agreed with Johnson, his publisher, to prepare an illustrated edition of Milton. He was to supply a commentary and translate the Latin and Italian poems. Another publisher had engaged the minor poet, William Hayley, for a like enterprise. This simultaneous interest in Milton led to acquaintance and then friendship. Hayley wrote warmly deprecating any thought of rivalry, and later pressed Cowper to visit him at Eartham, near Chichester. Mrs. Unwin had had a paralytic stroke at the end of 1791; and the journey was made as much for her sake as for the poet's. They made a stay of six weeks. This letter was written to one of the Throckmorton family. She, like John Johnson, had acted as amanuensis when a fair copy was being made of the *Homer*, and Cowper styled her "my lady of the ink-bottle".

Eartham, *Aug.* 12, 1792.

My Dearest Catharina,—

Though I have travelled far, nothing did I see in my travels that surprised me half so agreeably as your kind letter; for high as my opinion

of your good nature is, I had no hopes of hearing from you till I should have written first;—a pleasure which I intended to allow myself the first opportunity.

After three days confinement in a coach, and suffering as we went all that could be suffered from excessive heat and dust, we found ourselves late in the evening at the door of our friend Hayley. In every other respect the journey was extremely pleasant. At the Mitre in Barnet, where we lodged the first evening, we found our friend Mr. Rose, who had walked thither from his house in Chancery Lane to meet us; and at Kingston, where we dined the second day, I found my old and much valued friend General Cowper, whom I had not seen in thirty years, and but for this journey should never have seen again. Mrs. Unwin, on whose account I had a thousand fears before we set out, suffered as little from fatigue as myself, and begins I hope already to feel some beneficial effects from the air of Eartham, and the exercise that she takes in one of the most delightful pleasure-grounds in the world. They occupy three sides of a hill, lofty enough to command a view of the sea, which skirts the horizon to a length of many miles, with the Isle of Wight at the end of it. The inland scene is equally beautiful, consisting of a large and deep valley well cultivated, and enclosed by magnificent hills, all crowned with wood. I had, for my part, no conception that a poet could be the owner of such a Paradise; and his house is as elegant as his scenes are charming.

But think not, my dear Catharina, that amidst all these beauties I shall lose the remembrance of

the peaceful, but less splendid Weston. Your precincts will be as dear to me as ever, when I return; though when that day will arrive I know not, our host being determined, as I plainly see, to keep us as long as possible. Give my best love to your husband. Thank him most kindly for his attention to the old bard of Greece, and pardon me that I do not send you now an epitaph for Fop. I am not sufficiently recollected to compose even a bagatelle at present; but in due time you shall receive it.

Hayley, who will some time or other, I hope, see you at Weston, is already prepared to love you both, and being passionately fond of music, longs much to hear you.—Adieu!

W. C.

Letter 99. William Cowper to William Hayley

On his return to Weston, Cowper engaged with renewed activity in his work on Milton. Cordial relations were maintained with Hayley, who returned the visit at the end of 1793. Cowper's powers began to show signs of failure, and he was keenly distressed at the decay of Mrs. Unwin's health. About this time were written the tender lines *To Mary*.

Weston, *Feb.* 24, 1793.

. . . Oh! you rogue! what would you give to have such a dream about Milton, as I had about a week since? I dreamed that being in a house in the city, and with much company, looking towards the lower end of the room from the upper end of it, I descried a figure which I immediately knew to be Milton's. He was very gravely, but very neatly attired in the fashion of his day, and had a countenance which filled me with those feel-

ings that an affectionate child has for a beloved father, such, for instance, as Tom has for you. My first thought was wonder, where he could have been concealed so many years; my second, a transport of joy to find him still alive; my third, another transport to find myself in his company; and my fourth, a resolution to accost him. I did so, and he received me with a complacence, in which I saw equal sweetness and dignity. I spoke of his *Paradise Lost*, as every man must, who is worthy to speak of it at all, and told him a long story of the manner in which it affected me, when I first discovered it, being at that time a schoolboy. He answered me by a smile and a gentle inclination of his head. He then grasped my hand affectionately, and with a smile that charmed me, said, "Well, you for your part will do well also"; at last recollecting his great age (for I understood him to be two hundred years old), I feared that I might fatigue him by much talking, I took my leave, and he took his, with an air of the most perfect good breeding. His person, his features, his manner, were all so perfectly characteristic, that I am persuaded an apparition of him could not represent him more completely. This may be said to have been one of the dreams of Pindus, may it not? . . .—With Mary's kind love, I must now conclude myself, my dear Brother, ever yours,

LIPPUS.

Letter 100. William Cowper to Lady Hesketh

In 1794 a pension of £300 was granted to Cowper; and for the rest of his life money anxieties were over. The same year Mrs. Unwin became a permanent invalid. In the hope of benefit by change, the pair were removed under the devoted care of John Johnson into Norfolk, living at Mundesley and East Dereham, where Mrs. Unwin died at the close of 1796. The remaining years of Cowper's life are tragic, and, as Sainte Beuve says, "humbling for the human intellect". The sad poem, *The Castaway*, his last original effort, was composed in 1798. During these last months the poet, "ever, as the minutes flew, Entreated help, or cried 'Adieu!'" All powers of mind and body gradually declined, till he died peacefully in April, 1800.

Mundesley, *October* 13, 1798.

Dear Cousin,—

You describe delightful scenes, but you describe them to one who, if he ever saw them, could receive no delight from them—who has a faint recollection, and so faint as to be like an almost forgotten dream, that once he was susceptible of pleasure from such causes. The country that you have had in prospect has been always famed for its beauties; but the wretch who can derive no gratification from a view of nature, even under the advantage of her most ordinary dress, will have no eyes to admire her in any. In one day, in one moment I should rather have said, she became an *universal blank* to me, and, though from a different cause, yet with an effect as difficult to remove as blindness itself. In this country if there are not mountains, there are hills; if not broad and deep rivers, yet such as are sufficient to embellish a prospect; and an object still more magnificent than any river, the ocean itself, is

almost immediately under the window. Why is scenery like this, I had almost said, why is the very scene, which many years since I could not contemplate without rapture, now become, at the best, an insipid wilderness to me? It neighbours nearly, and as nearly resembles the scenery at Catfield; but with what different perceptions does it present me! The reason is obvious. My state of mind is a medium through which the beauties of Paradise itself could not be communicated with any effect but a painful one.

There is a wide interval between us, which it would be far easier for you than for me to pass. Yet I should in vain invite you. We shall meet no more. I know not what Mr. Johnson said of me in the long letter he addressed to you yesterday, but nothing, I am sure, that could make such an event seem probable.

I remain, as usual, dear Cousin, yours,

WM. COWPER.

EDWARD GIBBON

1737–1794

Gibbon, a descendant of ancient Kentish stock, was the delicate son of a delicate mother. Most of the care he received in childhood he owed to a maternal aunt, Catherine Porten. "Many wakeful nights did she sit by my bedside in trembling expectation that each hour would be my last." His education was much interrupted by ill health; but he developed a passion for reading which he afterwards declared to be more precious than "all the treasures of India". When he was about fifteen, Nature "displayed in his favour her mysterious energies". He became unexpectedly strong, and his father sent him prematurely to Oxford, where he arrived

"with a stock of information which might have puzzled a doctor, and a degree of ignorance of which a schoolboy might be ashamed". A year later he announced his conversion to Romanism, and was promptly "banished" by a horrified father to Lausanne. His residence there brought him back to Protestantism and made him an ardent student of history. He returned in 1758 to find a stepmother in his home. After the first feeling of dismay, he was attracted by her gentleness and warmth of heart; and a lasting affection grew up between them. Next year he became an officer in the Hampshire militia, a post which he found "not useless to the historian of the Roman Empire". Starting on a long Continental tour, he spent October, 1764, in Rome. There, while he was "musing amidst the ruins of the Capitol", listening to the friars "saying vespers in the Temple of Jupiter", the idea of his lifework started to his mind. Settling in London, he became in 1771 a Tory M.P. and a member of Dr. Johnson's Club. The *Decline and Fall* appeared in six quarto volumes; the first in February, 1776, the last three in 1788. The instant and unprecedented success of the first volume is set forth with undisguised pride in this letter to Mrs. Gibbon.

Letter 101. Edward Gibbon to his Stepmother

London, *March 26th*, 1776.

Dear Madam,—

Laziness is ingenious; but on this occasion mine was provided with too good an excuse, I mean your own silence. From post to post I have expected a letter to fix the time and manner of your journey to London. I now begin to despair, and am almost inclined to think that your sedentary life has riveted your chains and cut off your wings. I must therefore try (though a very sedentary animal myself) whether I cannot visit you at Bath, and, as the Easter vacation seems to promise me the most convenient leisure that I am likely to enjoy in the

whole year, I entertain some thoughts of running down to you for a few days. . . .

As to myself, I have the satisfaction of telling you that my book has been very well received by men of letters, men of the world, and even by fine feathered Ladies; in short, by every set of people except perhaps by the Clergy, who seem (I know not why) to shew their teeth on the occasion. A thousand copies are sold, and we are preparing a second edition, which in so short time is, for a book of that price, a very uncommon event.

I am, Dear Madam, ever yours,

E. GIBBON.

LETTER 102. EDWARD GIBBON TO HIS STEPMOTHER

Those who have formed their idea of Gibbon from the majestic style of his history will read with peculiar interest the volumes of his letters, edited, for the Sheffield family, by Mr. Rowland Prothero. The following playful note contrasts delightfully with the massive syntax of the *Decline and Fall.*

TUESDAY, *the 14th January, about* 1788.

Andover five o'clock in the afternoon.—Safe, well, and hungry. Not a single lion or giant to be seen on Salisbury plain.—Very odd!

LETTER 103. EDWARD GIBBON TO LORD SHEFFIELD

"If", says Mr. Prothero, "the *Memoirs* give us Gibbon in the full dress of a fine gentleman of letters, the correspondence reveals to us the man as he was known to his valet and his housekeeper. The letters have the ease and freshness of conversations with intimate friends, and, considering

the character of the century in which they were written, they present one feature which deserves special notice. Only one short sentence has been omitted as too coarse to be printed. With this solitary exception the reader knows the worst as well as the best of Gibbon, and there are scarcely a dozen phrases, scattered over 800 pages, which will offend good taste or good feeling."

DOWNING STREET, *Saturday* [*June 17th*, 1788].

I have but a moment between my return home and my dressing, and heartily tired I am; for I am now involved in the horrors of shopping, packing, &c.; yet I must write four lines to prevent a growl and a damn, which might salute the arrival of an empty-handed post on Sunday. I hope the whole caravan, Christians and pagans, arrived in good health at the castle; that the turrets begin to rise to the third heaven; that each has found a proper occupation; and that Tuft enjoys the freedom and felicity of the lawn.

Yesterday the august scene was closed for this year. Sheridan surpassed himself; and though I am far from considering him as a perfect orator, there were many beautiful passages in his speech, on justice, filial love, &c.; one of the closest chains of argument I ever heard, to prove that Hastings was responsible for the acts of Middleton; and a compliment, much admired, to a certain historian of your acquaintance. Sheridan, in the close of his speech, sunk into Burke's arms; but I called this morning, he is perfectly well. A good Actor!

I fear that I shall not be able to dine at home a single day. To-morrow Severy and myself go to Bushey. . . . The casing of my books is a prodigious operation. Adieu.

Letter 104. Edward Gibbon to Lord Sheffield

Gibbon, though he declared himself void of enthusiasm, was capable of warm feelings. He had two strongly attached friends, Lord Sheffield in England, and Deyverdun in Lausanne. The Sheffield household was a second home to him, and he had a lively interest in Lord and Lady Sheffield and their daughter Maria—"the Maria", as he sometimes called her. He was in Lausanne when the news came of Lady Sheffield's death. Though suffering grievously from dropsy, Gibbon set off almost immediately on his formidable journey to comfort his bereaved friend. He made Lord Sheffield his literary executor, bequeathing to him all his papers.

Lausanne, *April* 27, 1793.

My Dearest Friend,—

For such you most truly are, nor does there exist a person who obtains, or shall ever obtain, a superior place in my esteem and affection. After too long a silence I was sitting down to write, when, only yesterday morning (such is now the irregular slowness of the English post), I was suddenly struck, indeed struck to the heart, by the fatal intelligence from Sir Henry Clinton and M. de Lally. Alas! what is life, and what are our hopes and projects! When I embraced her at your departure from Lausanne, could I imagine that it was for the last time? When I postponed to another summer my journey to England, could I apprehend that I never, never should see her again? I always hoped that she would spin her feeble thread to a long duration, and that her delicate frame would survive (as is often the case) many constitutions of a stouter appearance. In four days! in your absence, in that of her children! But she is

now at rest; and if there be a future life, her mild virtues have surely entitled her to the reward of pure and perfect felicity. It is for you that I feel, and I can judge of your sentiments by comparing them with my own. I have lost, it is true, an amiable and affectionate friend, whom I had known and loved above three-and-twenty years, and whom I often styled by the endearing name of sister. But you are deprived of the companion of your life, the wife of your choice, and the mother of your children; poor children! the liveliness of Maria, and the softness of Louisa, render them almost equally the objects of my tenderest compassion. I do not wish to aggravate your grief; but, in the sincerity of friendship, I cannot hold a different language. I know the impotence of reason, and I much fear that the strength of your character will serve to make a sharper and more lasting impression.

The only consolation in these melancholy trials to which human life is exposed, the only one at least in which I have any confidence, is the presence of a real friend; and of that, as far as it depends on myself, you shall not be destitute. I regret the few days that must be lost in some necessary preparations; but I trust that to-morrow se'nnight (May the fifth) I shall be able to set forwards on my journey to England; and when this letter reaches you, I shall be considerably advanced on my way. As it is yet prudent to keep at a respectful distance from the banks of the French Rhine, I shall incline a little to the right, and proceed by Schaffousen and Stutgard to Frankfort and Cologne: the Austrian Netherlands are now open and safe, and I am sure of being able at least to pass from Ostend to

Dover; whence, without passing through London, I shall pursue the direct road to Sheffield Place.

Unless I should meet with some unforeseen accidents and delays, I hope, before the end of the month to share your solitude, and sympathize with your grief. All the difficulties of the journey which my indolence had probably magnified, have now disappeared before a stronger passion; and you will not be sorry to hear, that, as far as Frankfort to Cologne, I shall enjoy the advantage of the society, the conversation, the German language, and the active assistance of Severy. His attachment to me is the sole motive which prompts him to undertake this troublesome journey; and as soon as he has seen me over the roughest ground he will immediately return to Lausanne. The poor young man loved Lady S. as a mother, and the whole family is deeply affected by an event which reminds them too painfully of their own misfortune. Adieu. I could write volumes, and shall therefore break off abruptly. I shall write on the road, and hope to find a few lines *à poste restante* at Frankfort and Brussels. Adieu; ever yours.

Letter 105. Edward Gibbon to Lady Elizabeth Foster

Lady Elizabeth Foster was daughter of the Earl of Bristol (also Bishop of Derry). She married Mr. J. Foster, an Irish M.P. In 1787, travelling on the Continent after her husband's death, she met Gibbon at Lausanne. He read to her the closing passages of the *Decline and Fall*, which he had just completed. Lady Elizabeth was so cordial in her expressions of admiration, that Gibbon promptly made her an offer of marriage. The refusal he met with was borne philosophically, and did not lessen his admiration or friendly feeling. He

spoke of her as "a mortal for whom the wisest man, historic or medical, could throw away two or three worlds if he had them in possession"; and said she had fascinations enough to draw "the Lord Chancellor from his woolsack in full sight of the world". In 1809 she married the Duke of Devonshire.

LAUSANNE, *May the 4th*, 1793.

I know not whether you are already informed of the sudden death of poor Lady Sheffield after four days' illness, but I am sure that your feeling, affectionate mind will not be surprised to hear that I set out for England next week, and that a journey undertaken at the call of friendship. All the dragons of the way have already vanished. I go by Basle, Frankfort, Cologne, Brussels, and Ostend, and I flatter myself that the success of our allied arms will contribute every week to open my passage; it is even possible, though scarcely probable, that I may embark from the English town of Calais. Your answer to my last letter is doubtless on the road and will follow me, but you must write immediately to Sheffield Place, and I promise you a speedy and sincere account of our afflicted friend. I wish to hear of your motions and projects. I now sigh for your return to England, and shall be most bitterly disappointed if I have not the pleasure of seeing you in that happy island—yourself and the most amiable of Duchesses before the end of the autumn. I cannot look with confidence beyond that period. My friend and your Chevalier will guard me as far as Cologne or Frankfort; his tender attachment to his mother, who is still very melancholy, will recall him from thence to Lausanne, but in the course of next winter he has thoughts of visiting England. . . . Adieu. Excuse brevity, and address a classic prayer in

my behalf before some statue of Mercury, the god of travellers.

RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN

1751–1816

Sheridan, a native of Dublin, was educated at Harrow. In 1773 he married Miss Linley and settled in London. His play, *The Rivals*, produced at Covent Garden in 1775, failed at first. Withdrawn and revised, it established him as a favourite with playgoers. Next year Sheridan took over from Garrick the management of Drury Lane. In 1777 he staged his most brilliant work, *The School for Scandal*, in which he "carried the comedy of manners to the highest pitch"; and, on the motion of Dr. Johnson, was elected a member of the Literary Club. Entering Parliament in 1780, he promptly stepped to the front as a speaker, achieving his most splendid triumph in the impeachment of Hastings (1787). His speech at the opening of the trial lasted through four days. On its conclusion, Sheridan, according to Gibbon who was present, sank into Burke's arms—an incident which has been embellished by Macaulay. Actually Burke, in his generous warmth of admiration, caught Sheridan, as he sat down, in his arms. (It was on this occasion that Sheridan complimented Gibbon on his "luminous page", a golden phrase which Moore turned into pinchbeck by substituting "voluminous".) Sheridan had now passed the high-water mark of his fortune. In 1791 Drury Lane had to be rebuilt at the cost of £225,000, the work being completed in 1794. In 1792 he lost his wife, and with her the one anchor that held him steady. A heavy catastrophe befell him in 1809. The new theatre was burnt down, the blaze lighting up the House of Commons, where Sheridan was in his place during a debate. His affairs now became heavily involved. The loss of his seat in Parliament gave the finishing stroke. His person was no longer secure: he was liable to arrest. In 1813 he was arrested for debt and kept for two or three days in a sponging-house. When the end came, his house was invaded by bailiffs, who threatened even the chamber where he lay dying.

Letter 106. Richard Sheridan to John Kemble

Drury Lane Theatre was "orderly and well-governed", when it was handed over by Garrick to Sheridan. But Sheridan's rule generally spelt chaos: his actors, even Mrs. Siddons, were often unpaid. Receipts soon began to drop. At one period Sheridan's father was stage manager. He was as despotic as his son was easygoing. Shortly after Garrick's death (1779) a better manager took charge—King, the actor. Later the confusion returned. Sometimes Sheridan acted as manager; then it was King; then it was Kemble. Kemble began his managership in October, 1788. He was a brother of Mrs. Siddons, and had a good reputation as an actor. Tall, imposing, and solemn, he appeared to best advantage as Cato or Coriolanus. He had several quarrels with Sheridan, with whose vagaries he became more and more disgusted. He finally resigned his connection with the theatre in 1802.

Dear Kemble,—

If I had not a real good opinion of your principles and intentions upon all subjects, and a very bad opinion of your nerves and philosophy upon some, I should take very ill indeed, the letter I received from you this evening.

That the management of the theatre is a situation capable of becoming troublesome is information which I do not want, and a discovery which I thought you had made long ago.

I should be very sorry to write to you gravely on your offer, because I must consider it as a nervous flight, which it would be as unfriendly in me to notice seriously as it would be in you seriously to have made it.

What I *am* most serious in is a determination that, while the theatre is indebted, and others, for it and for me, are so involved and pressed as they

are, I will exert myself, and give every attention and judgment in my power to the establishment of its interests. In you I hoped, and do hope, to find an assistant, on principles of liberal and friendly confidence, — I mean confidence that should be above touchiness and reserve, and that should trust to me to estimate the value of that assistance.

If there is anything amiss in your mind not arising from the *troublesomeness* of your situation, it is childish and unmanly not to disclose it to me. The frankness with which I have always dealt towards you entitles me to expect that you should have done so.

But I have no reason to believe this to be the case; and, attributing your letter to a disorder which I know ought not to be indulged, I prescribe that you shall keep your appointment at the Piazza Coffee-house, to-morrow at five, and, taking four bottles of claret instead of three, to which in sound health you might stint yourself, forget that you ever wrote the letter, as I shall that I ever received it. R. B. SHERIDAN.

LETTER 107. RICHARD SHERIDAN TO CHARLES WARD

The following pair of notes are characteristic of Sheridan, the ever impecunious. They are addressed to the treasurer of Drury Lane Theatre. In his darkest hours, Sheridan was unfailingly full of plans for "getting through".

SOUTHHILL, *Friday* [*Feb. 3rd*, 1814].

DEAR WARD,—

Beg, borrow, steal, forge £10 for me, and *send by return of Post*, then I am with you.

Yours truly.

What do you think of Kean? I am glad he is to play Richard. And note of post, how is Brinsley?

SOUTHHILL, *Thursday* [*Feb. 18th*, 1814].

DEAR WARD,—

Thou art a trusty man, and when I write to you I get an answer and the thing done, if it can be; and you don't write or want to receive *love letters*, which are my horror. I have been very ill with a violent attack of bile, kept my bed three days; *but don't say this to a soul*, it always does harm in my situation. I am now quite well, and the better for it; pray let two or three theatre chaps, or their connections, put up a little scaffolding in my hall that may serve to wash the walls and whitewash the ceiling, as soon as you receive this. I will explain my motive when I arrive on Sunday. As I suppose I have replaced the last £10 you stole for me, I trust you may reputably renew the theft, when I arrive, should it again be wanted, as I greatly fear it will. I have had a very civil letter from Hudson, from whom I have great resources coming. There are *political* events (*home*) brewing. One letter more will catch me here.

Ever yours,

R. B. S.

LETTER 108. RICHARD SHERIDAN TO SAMUEL ROGERS

Through all the troubles and disgrace of his closing years, Sheridan had a faithful friend in the poet Samuel Rogers. One night, on reaching home late, Rogers found on his table the following despairing appeal. He made his way, with his

brother poet Moore, after midnight to Sheridan's house and spoke to a servant, who declared that all was safe for the night. In the morning Rogers sent £150 by Moore's hands. Sheridan was always liable to fits of sudden optimism. Moore states that he found him "good-natured and cordial", showing "his usual sanguineness of disposition in speaking of the price he expected for his dramatic works".

SAVILLE ROW, *May* 15, 1816.

I find things settled so that £150 will remove all difficulty. I am absolutely undone and broken-hearted. I shall negotiate for the Plays successfully in the course of a week, when all shall be returned. I have desired Fairbrother to get back the guarantee for thirty.

They are going to put the carpets out of the window, and break into Mrs. S.'s room and *take me*—for God's sake let me see you.

R. B. S.

FANNY BURNEY

1752–1840

Frances Burney had French blood in her veins by her mother's side. Her father was an organist and teacher of music. He appears to have been, Macaulay tells us, "as bad a father as a very honest, affectionate, and sweet-tempered man can well be". Fanny early lost her mother, and was entirely self-educated. Though at eight she did not even know her letters, she was already scribbling at the age of ten. She wrote in secret, confiding in no one but her sister. Her first novel, *Evelina, or a Young Lady's Entrance into the World*, appeared anonymously in January, 1778. Before publishing, she went to her father for his consent. He treated the matter as a joke, burst out laughing, and, without asking the name of the book, told her to do as she liked. The novel was refused by Dodsley, but accepted by Lowndes, who gave for the manuscript £20, adding later the sum of £10. Johnson said of the book that it contained passages which might

do honour to Richardson. The book brought the young authoress fame and many admirers. Mrs. Thrale made friends with her, and she became a favourite guest at Streatham, where she was caressed by Johnson. Her second novel, *Cecilia, or Memoirs of an Heiress*, appeared in 1782. The first edition, of two thousand copies, for which she received £250, was all sold in three months. In 1786 she made the grave mistake of accepting an appointment as Keeper of the Robes in the royal household. For one of her sensitive nature, it was a form of splendid slavery. Her health broke down, and she was permitted in 1791 to retire with a pension of £100.

Letter 109. Fanny Burney to her sister Susan

Miss Burney seems to have dreaded the adverse verdict of her own small circle much more than that of all the London critics. Especially was she anxious to secure the commendation of an old and intimate friend of the family, Samuel Crisp. He had attempted tragic drama and had failed. Angry with actors and with critics, he retired from the world and sought obscurity in a lonely Surrey mansion. But he maintained his cordial relations with the Burneys, and for Fanny had the warmest regard. He called her his Fannikin; she styled him Daddy.

Chessington, *Sunday, July* 6, 1778.

Your letter, my dear Susan, and the enclosed one from Lowndes, have flung me into such a vehement perturbation, that I hardly can tell whether I wake or dream, and it is even with difficulty that I can fetch my breath. I have been strolling round the garden three or four times, in hopes of regaining a little quietness. However, I am not very angry at my inward disturbance, though it even exceeds what I experienced from the *Monthly Review*.

My dear Susy, what a wonderful affair has this been, and how extraordinary is this torrent of success, which sweeps down all before it! I often

think it too much — nay, almost wish it would happen to some other person, who had more ambition, whose hopes were more sanguine, and who could less have borne to be buried in the oblivion which I even sought. But though it might have been better bestowed, it could by no one be more gratefully received.

Indeed, I can't help being grave upon the subject; for a success so really unexpected almost overpowers me. I wonder at myself that my spirits are not more elated. I believe half the flattery I have had would have made me madly merry; but *all* serves only to almost depress me by the fulness of heart it occasions. . . .

I have been serving Daddy Crisp a pretty trick this morning. How he would rail if he found it all out! I had a fancy to dive pretty deeply into the real rank in which he held my book; so I told him that your last letter acquainted me who was reported to be the author of *Evelina*. I added that it was a profound secret, and he must by no means mention it to a human being. He bid me tell him directly, according to his usual style of command, but I insisted upon his guessing.

"I can't guess," said he; "maybe it is *you*."

Oddso! thought I, what do you mean by that?

"Pooh, nonsense," cried I, "what should make you think of me?"

"Why, you look guilty," answered he.

This was a horrible homestroke. Deuce take my looks! thought I. I shall owe them a grudge for this! However, I found it was a mere random shot, and, without much difficulty, I laughed it to scorn.

And who do you think he guessed next?—My

father!—there's for you!—and several questions he asked me, whether he had lately been shut up much—and so on. And this was not all—for he afterwards guessed Mrs. Thrale and Mrs. Greville.

There's honour and glory for you?—I assure you I grinned prodigiously.

He then would guess no more. So I served him another trick for his laziness. I read a paragraph in your last letter (which, perhaps, you may not perfectly remember) in which you say the private report is that the author is the son of the late Dr. Friend, my likeness.

Now this son is a darling of my daddy's, who reckons him the most sensible and intelligent young man of his acquaintance; so I trembled *a few*, for I thought, ten to one but he'd say: "He?—not he—I promise you!" But no such thing; his immediate answer was: "Well, he's very capable of that, or anything else."

I grinned broader than before.

And here the matter rests. I shan't undeceive him, at least till he has finished the book.

Letter 110. Fanny Burney to Samuel Crisp

To Miss Burney's lively pen we owe several vivid sketches of the family circle at Streatham, with valuable details which aid us in supplementing—and in correcting—the account given by Mrs. Thrale of Dr. Johnson's manner of life there.

Streatham, *March*, 1779.

The kindness and honours I meet with from this charming family are greater than I can mention: sweet Mrs. Thrale hardly suffers me to leave her for a moment; and Dr. Johnson is another Daddy

Crisp to me, for he has a partial goodness to your Fannikin, that has made him sink the comparative shortness of our acquaintance, and treat and think of me as one who had long laid claim to him.

If you knew these two, you would love them, or I don't know you so well as I think I do. Dr. Johnson has more fun, and comical humour, and love of nonsense about him, than almost anybody I ever saw: I mean when with those he likes; for otherwise, he can be as severe and as bitter as reports relate him. Mrs. Thrale has all the gaiety of disposition and lightness of heart which commonly belong to fifteen. We are, therefore, merry enough, and I am frequently seized with the same tittering and ridiculous fits as those with which I have so often amazed and amused poor Kitty Cooke.

One thing let me not omit of this charming woman, which I believe will weigh with you in her favour; her political doctrine is so exactly like yours, that it is never started but I exclaim: "Dear ma'am, if my Daddy Crisp was here, I believe between you, you would croak me mad". And this sympathy of horrible foresight not a little contributes to incline her to believe the other parts of speech with which I regale her concerning you. She wishes very much to know you, and I am sure you would hit it off comfortably; but I told her what a live taste you had for shunning all new acquaintances, and shirking almost all your old ones. That I may never be among the latter, heartily hopes my dear daddy's

Ever affectionate and obliged,

F. B.

Letter iii. Fanny Burney to Mrs. Lock

The Locks, old friends of the Burney family, had their home at Norbury Park, near Dorking. Close by lived Fanny's married sister Susanna, Mrs. Phillips. In the neighbourhood was Juniper Hall, where some French refugees, including General d'Arblay, had settled. It was while visiting her sister that Miss Burney made the acquaintance of her future husband. The following letter was written while she was still a member of Queen Charlotte's household.

Kew, *April*, 1789,

My dearest Friends,—

I have Her Majesty's commands to enquire—whether you have any of a certain breed of poultry?

N.B.—*What* breed I do not remember.

And to say she has just received a small group of the same herself.

N.B.—The quantity I have forgotten.

And to add, she is assured they are something very rare and scarce, and extraordinary and curious.

N.B.—By *whom* she was assured I have not heard.

And to subjoin, that you must send word if you have any of the same sort.

N.B.—How you are to find that out, I cannot tell.

And to mention, as a corollary, that, if you have none of them, and should like to have some, she has a cock and a hen she can spare, and will appropriate them to Mr. Lock and my dearest Fredy.

This conclusive stroke so pleased and exhilarated me, that forthwith I said you would both be enchanted, and so forgot all the preceding particulars.

And I said, moreover, that I knew you would rear them, and cheer them, and fondle them like your children.

So now—pray write a very *fair answer* fairly, in fair hand, and to fair purpose.

My Susanna is just now come—so all is fair with my dearest Mr. and Mrs. Lock's F. B.

Letter 112. Madame d'Arblay to Dr. Burney

Miss Burney's marriage with General d'Arblay took place in 1793, her pension of £100 being almost their sole means of support. She resumed her literary work, and in 1796 produced *Camilla*, for which she obtained three thousand guineas. Part of this sum was used to build a cottage at Dorking. In 1802 Napoleon gave her husband a small civil appointment, and France became her home for several years.

Bookham. *Friday, October*, 1796.

How well I know and feel the pang of this cruel day to my beloved father! My heart seems visiting him almost every minute in grief and participation; yet I was happy to see it open with a smiling aspect, and encourage a superstition of hoping it portentous of a good conclusion. . . .

But I meant to have begun with our thanks for my dear kind father's indulgence of our extreme curiosity and interest in the sight of the reviews. I am quite happy in what I have escaped of greater severity, though my mate cannot bear that the palm should be contested by Evelina and Cecilia; his partiality rates the last as so much the highest; so does the newspaper I have mentioned, of which I long to send you a copy. But those immense men, whose single praise was fame

and security—who established, by a word, the two elder sisters—are now silent. Dr. Johnson and Sir Joshua are no more, and Mr. Burke is ill, or otherwise engrossed; yet, even without their powerful influence, to which I owe such unspeakable obligation, the essential success of Camilla exceeds that of the elders. The sale is truly astonishing. Charles has just sent to me that five hundred only remain of four thousand, and it has appeared scarcely three months.

The first edition of *Evelina* was of eight hundred, the second of five hundred, and the third of a thousand. What the following have been I have never heard. The sale from that period became more flourishing than the publisher cared to announce. Of *Cecilia* the first edition was reckoned enormous at two thousand; and, as a part of payment was reserved for it, I remember our dear Daddy Crisp thought it very unfair. It was printed, like this, in July, and sold in October, to everyone's wonder. Here, however, the sale is increased in rapidity more than a third. Charles says,—

> Now heed no more what critics thought 'em,
> Since this you know, all people bought 'em.

We have resumed our original plan, and are going immediately to build a little cottage for ourselves. We shall make it as small and as cheap as will accord with its being warm and comfortable. . . .

Imagine but the ecstasy of M. d'Arblay in training, all his own way, an entire new garden. He dreams now of cabbage-walks, potato-beds, bean-perfumes, and peas-blossoms. My mother should

send him a little sketch to help his flower-garden, which will be his second favourite object.

Alex has made no progress in phrases, but pronounces single words a few more. Adieu, most dear Sir. F. D'A.

GEORGE CRABBE

1754–1832

Crabbe came from a very humble Suffolk home and had a hard upbringing. After a scanty schooling, he was apprenticed at the age of fourteen to a village doctor that he might be trained to the medical profession. By the time he was eighteen he had fallen in love with Sarah Elmy, whom he afterwards married, and began to try his hand at verses. After a visit to London, where he had a brief course in surgery, he set up in practice for himself in his own town of Aldborough. Gathering many of his remedies with botanical skill from ditches and hedgerows, he incurred from his patients the reproach of dealing in cheap remedies. His prospects were of the poorest. In 1780, with a borrowed five pounds, he sailed to London, and began a hard struggle to make a living by literature. In vain he turned for help to wealthy patrons like Lord North. After some months of misery, he applied to Burke. Burke, though an entire stranger, gave him a patient hearing, read his poems, found him a publisher for *The Library*, and finally took him into his own house at Beaconsfield. Burke also persuaded Crabbe to take orders, and made interest with the Duke of Rutland, who appointed Crabbe his chaplain. Thurlow, the Lord Chancellor, who thought Crabbe "as like Parson Adams as twelve to the dozen", gave him two livings in Dorsetshire; and in 1783, after publishing *The Village*, Crabbe was able to marry Miss Elmy. When, in 1784, the Duke of Rutland went to Ireland as lord-lieutenant, Crabbe and his wife continued to occupy their quarters in Belvoir Castle.

Letter 113. George Crabbe to Edmund Burke

Crabbe wrote the following letter to Burke, and delivered it by hand at Burke's London residence, after which he spent the greater part of the night in pacing Westminster Bridge. The letter is undated; but the evidence goes to show that it was put into Burke's hands in March, 1781. None of Burke's political triumphs are more creditable to his head and heart than his treatment of this unknown genius. "He went into Mr. Burke's room," says Crabbe's son and biographer, "a poor young adventurer, spurned by the opulent and rejected by the publishers, his last shilling gone, and all but his last hope with it; he came out virtually secure of almost all the good fortune that, by successive steps, afterwards fell to his lot."

[*March*, 1781.]

Sir,—

I am sensible that I need even your talents to apologize for the freedom I now take; but I have a plea which, however simply urged, will, with a mind like yours, Sir, procure me pardon: I am one of those outcasts on the world, who are without a friend, without employment, and without bread. Pardon me a short preface. I had a partial father, who gave me a better education than his broken fortune would have allowed; and a better than was necessary, as he could give me that only. I was designed for the profession of physic; but not having wherewithal to complete the requisite studies, the design but served to convince me of a parent's affection, and the error it had occasioned. In April last, I came to London with three pounds, and flattered myself this would be sufficient to supply me with the common necessaries of life, till my abilities should procure me more; of these I had the highest opinion, and a poetical vanity

contributed to my delusion. I knew little of the world, and had read books only: I wrote, and fancied perfection in my compositions; when I wanted bread they promised me affluence, and soothed me with dreams of reputation, whilst my appearance subjected me to contempt.

Time, reflection, and want, have shown me my mistake. I see my trifles in that which I think the true light; and, whilst I deem them such, have yet the opinion that holds them superior to the common run of poetical publications.

I had some knowledge of the late Mr. Nassau, the brother of Lord Rochford; in consequence of which I asked his lordship's permission to inscribe my little work to him. Knowing it to be free from all political allusions and personal abuse, it was no very material point to me to whom it was dedicated. His lordship thought it none to him, and obligingly consented to my request. I was told that a subscription would be the more profitable method for me, and therefore endeavoured to circulate copies of the enclosed Proposals.

I am afraid, Sir, I disgust you with this very dull narration, but believe me punished in the misery that occasions it. You will conclude, that, during this time, I must have been at more expense than I could afford; indeed, the most parsimonious could not have avoided it. The printer deceived me, and my little business has had every delay. The people with whom I live perceive my situation, and find me to be indigent and without friends. About ten days since, I was compelled to give a note for seven pounds, to avoid an arrest for about double that sum which I owe. I wrote to every friend I had, but my friends are poor likewise; the

time of payment approached, and I ventured to represent my case to Lord Rochford. I begged to be credited for this sum till I received it of my subscribers, which, I believe, will be within one month; but to this letter I had no reply, and I have probably offended by my importunity. Having used every honest means in vain, I yesterday confessed my inability, and obtained, with much entreaty, and as the greatest favour a week's forbearance, when I am positively told, that I must pay the money, or prepare for a prison.

You will guess the purpose of so long an introduction. I appeal to you, Sir, as a good, and, let me add, a great man. I have no other pretensions to your favour than that I am an unhappy one. It is not easy to support the thoughts of confinement; and I am coward enough to dread such an end to my suspense.

Can you, Sir, in any degree, aid me with propriety? Will you ask any demonstration of my veracity? I have imposed upon myself, but I have been guilty of no other imposition. Let me, if possible, interest your compassion. I know those of rank and fortune are teased with frequent petitions, and are compelled to refuse the requests even of those whom they know to be in distress; it is therefore, with a distant hope I ventured to solicit such favour; but you will forgive me, Sir, if you do not think proper to relieve. It is impossible that sentiments like yours can proceed from any but a humane and generous heart.

I will call upon you, Sir, to-morrow, and if I have not the happiness to obtain credit with you, I must submit to my fate. My existence is a pain

to myself, and every one near and dear to me are distressed in my distresses.

My connexions, once the source of happiness, now embitter the reverse of my fortune, and I have only to hope a speedy end to a life so unpromisingly begun: in which (though it ought not to be boasted of) I can reap some consolation from looking to the end of it. I am, Sir, with the greatest respect,

Your obedient and most humble servant,

GEORGE CRABBE.

LETTER 114. GEORGE CRABBE TO WALTER SCOTT

The Newspaper appeared in 1785, after which Crabbe published nothing till the *Parish Register* in 1807—a silence of over twenty years. During this period his life was spent at Muston Parsonage, Leicester, or Ducking Hall, Suffolk, as a prosperous country parson. In 1812 appeared *Tales in Verse*. The closing period of his life, spent at Trowbridge, was pleasantly broken in 1822 by a visit to Scott at Edinburgh.

MUSTON, *June*, 1812.

Accept my very sincere congratulations on your clerkship and all things beside which you have had the goodness to inform me of. It is indeed very pleasant to me to find that the author of works that give me and thousands delight, is so totally independent of the midwives you speak of. Moreover, I give you joy of an honourable intercourse with the noble family of Buccleugh, whom you happily describe to me, and by whose notice, or rather notice of my book, I am much favoured. With respect to my delightful situation in the Vale of

Belvoir, and under the very shade of the castle, I will not say that your imagination has created its beauties, but I must confess it has enlarged and adorned them. The Vale of Belvoir is flat and unwooded, and save that an artificial, straight-lined piece of water, and one or two small streams, intersect it, there is no other variety than is made by the different crops, wheat, barley, beans. The castle, however, is a noble place, and stands on one entire hill, taking up its whole surface, and has a fine appearance from the window of my parsonage, at which I now sit, at about a mile and a half distance. The duke also is a duke-like man, and the duchess a very excellent lady. They have great possessions, and great patronage, *but*—you see this unlucky particle, in one or other of Horne Tooke's senses, will occur—*but* I am now of the *old race*. And what then? Well, I will explain. Thirty years since I was taken to Belvoir by its late possessor, as a domestic chaplain. I read the service on a Sunday, and fared sumptuously every day. At that time, the Chancellor, Lord Thurlow, gave me a rectory in Dorsetshire, small, but a living; this the duke taught me to disregard as a provision, and promised better things. While I lived with him on this pleasant footing, I observed many persons in the neighbourhood, who came occasionally to dine, and were civilly received. "How do you do, Dr. Smith? How is Mrs. Smith?" "I thank your grace, well"; and so they took their venison and claret. "Who are these?" said I to a young friend of the duke's. "Men of the *old race*, sir; people whom the *old duke* was in the habit of seeing; for some of them he had done something, and had he yet

lived, all had their chance. They now make way for us, but keep up a sort of connexion." The son of the *old duke* of that day and I were of an age to a week; and with the wisdom of a young man, I looked distantly on his death and my own. I went into Suffolk and married, with decent views, and prospects of views more enlarging. His grace went into Ireland—and died. Mrs. Crabbe and I philosophized as well as we could; and after some three or four years, Lord Thurlow, once more at the request of the duchess dowager, gave me the crown livings I now hold, on my resignation of that in Dorsetshire. They were at that time worth about £70 or £80 a year more than that, and now bring me about £400; but a long minority ensued —new connexions were formed; and when, some few years since, I came back into this country, and expressed a desire of inscribing my verses to the duke, I obtained leave, indeed, but I almost repented the attempt, from the coldness of the reply. Yet, recollecting that great men are beset with applicants of all kinds, I acquitted the duke of injustice, and determined to withdraw myself as one of the *old race*, and give way to stronger candidates for notice. To this resolution I kept strictly, and left it entirely to the family whether or no I should consider myself as a stranger, who, having been disappointed in his expectation, by unforeseen events, must take his chance, and ought to take it patiently. For reasons I have no inclination to canvass, his grace has obligingly invited me, and I occasionally meet his friends at the castle, without knowing whether I am to consider that notice as the promise of favour, or as favour in itself. I have two sons, both in Orders, partly from a pro-

mise given to Mrs. Crabbe's family, that I would bring them up precisely alike, and partly because I did not know what else to do with them. They will share a family property that will keep them from pining upon a curacy. And what more?—I must not perplex myself with conjecturing. You find, Sir, that you are much the greater man; for except what Mr. Hatchard puts into my privy purse, I doubt whether £600 be not my total receipts; but he at present helps us, and my boys being no longer at college, I can take my wine without absolutely repining at the enormity of the cost. I fully agree with you respecting the necessity of a profession for a youth of moderate fortune. Woe to the lad of genius without it! and I am flattered by what you mention of my *Patron*. Your praise is current coin.

Letter 115. Walter Scott to George Crabbe

This letter is introduced here, out of its chronological order, to show the relation of Crabbe to the subsequent generation of poets. Scott here testifies to the delight he felt in reading and committing to memory portions of *The Village* and *The Library*. Crabbe, however, had little influence on the *form* of Scott's poetry. It was not from Crabbe he got his metres. The *Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805), his first great poetic achievement, won its popularity largely by its metrical appeal; and that was borrowed by Scott from Coleridge's *Christabel*, which, though not published till 1816, had been privately recited in Scott's hearing a year or two before he composed the *Lay*.

Ashestiel, *October* 21, 1809.

Dear Sir,—

I am just honoured with your letter, which gives me the more sensible pleasure, since it has

gratified a wish of more than twenty years' standing. It is, I think, fully that time since I was for great part of a very snowy winter the inhabitant of an old house in the country, in a course of poetical study, so very like that of your admirably painted "Young Lad", that I could hardly help saying, "That's me!" when I was reading the tale to my family. Among the very few books which fell under my hands was a volume or two of Dodsley's *Annual Register*, one of which contained copious extracts from *The Village* and *The Library*, particularly the conclusion of book first of the former, and an extract from the latter, beginning with the description of the old romances. I committed them most faithfully to my memory, where your verses must have felt themselves very strangely lodged in company with ghost stories, border riding ballads, scraps of old plays, and all the miscellaneous stuff which a strong appetite for reading, with neither means nor discrimination for selection, had assembled in the head of a lad of eighteen. New publications at that time were very rare in Edinburgh, and my means of procuring them very limited; so that, after a long search for the poems which contained these beautiful specimens, and which had afforded me so much delight, I was fain to rest contented with the extracts from the *Register*, which I could repeat at this moment. You may, therefore, guess my sincere delight when I saw your poems at a later period assume the rank in the public consideration which they so well deserve. It was a triumph to my own immature taste to find I had anticipated the applause of the learned and of the critical, and I became very desirous to offer my *gratulor*, among the more important

plaudits which you have had from every quarter. I should certainly have availed myself of the free-masonry of authorship (for our trade may claim to be a mystery as well as Abhorson's), to address to you a copy of a new poetical attempt which I have now upon the anvil, and esteem myself particularly obliged to Mr. Hatchard and to your goodness acting upon his information, for giving me the opportunity of paving the way for such a freedom. I am too proud of the compliments you honour me with, to affect to decline them; and with respect to the comparative view I have of my own labours and yours, I can only assure you that none of my little folks, about the formation of whose taste and principles I may be supposed naturally solicitous, have ever read any of my own poems, while yours have been our regular evening's amusement. My eldest girl begins to read well, and enters as well into the humour as into the sentiment of your admirable descriptions of human life. As for rivalry, I think it has seldom existed among those who know by experience that there are much better things in the world than literary reputation, and that one of the best of these good things is the regard and friendship of those deservedly and generally esteemed for their worth or their talents. I believe many dilettanti authors do cocker themselves up into a great jealousy of anything that interferes with what they are pleased to call their fame, but I should as soon think of nursing one of my own fingers into a whitlow for my private amusement, as encouraging such a feeling. I am truly sorry to observe you mention bad health. Those who contribute so much to the improvement as well as the delight

of society should escape this evil. I hope, however, that one day your state of health may permit you to view this country. I have very few calls to London, but it will greatly add to the interest of those which may occur, that you will permit me the honour of waiting upon you in my journey, and assuring you, in person, of the early admiration and sincere respect with which I have the honour to be, dear Sir, yours, &c.

WALTER SCOTT.

WILLIAM BLAKE

1757–1827

William Blake, the son of a London hosier, was born a short two years before Robert Burns. Encouraged in his artistic tastes by his father, he attempted original verse in his twelfth year. As a mere child he gave proof of that visionary power which became the distinguishing feature of his genius. Once, after a walk among hills, he told his father he had seen a tree filled with angels, and bright wings like stars on every bough. For this statement, had his mother not interceded, his father would have punished him. At the age of fourteen Blake was apprenticed to an engraver, who allowed him to find the material for his earliest studies in Westminster Abbey. Completing his apprenticeship in 1778, Blake supported himself by engraving for London booksellers, and made the acquaintance of Flaxman, the sculptor. His marriage with Catherine Boucher, one of the noblest of wives, took place in 1782, and next year (three years before Burns's Kilmarnock edition of his *Poems*) was printed Blake's first volume, *Poetical Sketches*. The cost of printing was borne by Flaxman and another friend, and the whole impression was given to Blake. What he did with it is not known. In 1784 Blake set up shop as a printseller and engraver, working for a bare living with that unceasing and prodigious industry which marked his whole life. Here, with the help of his wife, was published his *Songs of Innocence*, the plates for the

separate pages being printed, or rather engraved, by his own hands and the impressions subsequently coloured.

Letter 116. William Blake to John Flaxman

John Flaxman (1755–1826) is generally esteemed the greatest of English sculptors and designers. He recognized the peculiar genius of Blake, and became his stanch friend. Flaxman had received kindness from the minor poet Hayley (Letter 98), with whom he occasionally spent a summer holiday, and when Hayley required an engraver to illustrate his *Life of Cowper*, Blake was introduced. The result was an invitation from Hayley to the Blakes to reside in his neighbourhood while the work was in progress. At this Sussex village, in a cottage by the sea, Blake spent three happy active years.

Felpham, *September* 21, 1800.

Dear Sculptor of Eternity,—

We are safe arrived at our cottage, which is more beautiful than I thought it, and more convenient. It is a perfect model for cottages, and I think for palaces of magnificence, only enlarging not altering its proportions and adding ornaments and not principles. Nothing can be more grand than its simplicity and usefulness. Simple without intricacy, it seems to be the spontaneous expression of humanity, congenial to the wants of man. No other formed house can ever please me so well, nor shall I ever be persuaded, I believe, that it can be improved either in beauty or use.

Mr. Hayley received us with his usual brotherly affection. I have begun to work. Felpham is a sweet place for study, because it is more spiritual than London. Heaven opens here on all sides her golden gates: her windows are not obstructed by

vapours; voices of celestial inhabitants are more distinctly heard and their forms more distinctly seen; and my cottage is also a shadow of their houses. My wife and sister are both well, courting Neptune for an embrace.

Our journey was very pleasant, and though we had a great deal of luggage no grumbling. All was cheerfulness and good humour on the road, and yet we could not arrive at our cottage before half-past eleven at night, owing to the necessary shifting of our luggage from one chaise to another, for we had seven different chaises and as many different drivers. We set out between six and seven in the morning of Thursday, with sixteen heavy boxes and portfolios full of prints.

And now begins a new life, because another covering of earth is shaken off. I am more famed in heaven for my works than I could well conceive. In my brain are studies and chambers filled with books and pictures of old, which I wrote and painted in ages of eternity before my mortal life; and those works are the delight and study of archangels. Why then should I be anxious about the riches and fame of mortality? The Lord our Father will do for us and with us according to His divine will.

You, O dear Flaxman, are a sublime archangel —my friend and companion from eternity. In the divine bosom is our dwelling-place. I look back into the regions of reminiscence, and behold our ancient days before this earth appeared in its vegetative mortality to my mortal vegetated eyes. I see our houses of eternity which can never be separated, though our mortal vehicles should stand at the remotest corners of heaven from each other.

Farewell, my best Friend;—remember me and my wife in love and friendship to our dear Mrs. Flaxman, whom we ardently desire to entertain beneath our thatched roof of rusted gold. And believe me for ever to remain your grateful and affectionate

WILLIAM BLAKE.

LETTER 117. WILLIAM BLAKE TO THOMAS BUTTS

Hayley was kind of literary squire, an elegant trifler. Though good-natured and friendly, he was too shallow to appreciate the poetic side of Blake's genius. It was not long before Blake felt the want of congenial companionship, and he returned to London. He continued to make a precarious livelihood by engraving for various patrons, among whom was Thomas Butts. Another, John Linnell, was the stay of his declining years. For him Blake did some of his finest work, including the sublime *Inventions to the Book of Job*, his noblest artistic achievement. Blake was long in winning recognition as a poet. Wordsworth thought his genius "insane", but affirmed that he would rather have the insanity of Blake than the sanity of Byron.

FELPHAM, *July* 6, 1803.

I ought to tell you that Mr. Hayley is quite agreeable to our return, and that there is all the appearance in the world of our being fully employed in engraving for his projected works, particularly Cowper's *Milton*—a work now on foot by subscription, and I understand that the subscription goes on briskly. This work is to be a very elegant one, and to consist of all Milton's Poems with Cowper's Notes, and translations by Cowper from Milton's Latin and Italian Poems. These works will be ornamented with engravings from designs by Romney, Flaxman, and your

humble servant, and to be engraved also by the last-named. The profits of the work are intended to be appropriated to erect a monument to the memory of Cowper in St. Paul's or Westminster Abbey. Such is the project; and Mr. Addington and Mr. Pitt are both among the subscribers, which are already numerous and of the first rank. The price of the work is six guineas. Thus I hope that all our three years' trouble ends in good luck at last, and shall be forgot by my affections and only remembered by my understanding, to be a memento in time to come, and to speak to future generations by a sublime allegory, which is now perfectly completed into a grand poem. I may praise it, since I dare not pretend to be any other than the secretary; the authors are in Eternity. I consider it as the grandest Poem that this world contains. Allegory addressed to the intellectual powers, while it is altogether hidden from the corporeal understanding, is my definition of the most sublime Poetry. It is also somewhat in the same manner defined by Plato. This poem shall, by Divine assistance, be progressively printed and ornamented with prints, and given to the Public. But of this work I take care to say little to Mr. Hayley, since he is as much averse to my poetry as he is to a chapter in the Bible. He knows that I have writ it, for I have shown it to him, and he has read part by his own desire, and has looked with sufficient contempt to enhance my opinion of it. But I do not wish to imitate by seeming too obstinate in poetic pursuits. But if all the world should set their faces against this, I have orders to set my face like a flint (Ezek. iii. 8) against their faces, and my forehead against their foreheads.

As to Mr. Hayley, I feel myself at liberty to say as follows upon this ticklish subject. I regard fashion in Poetry as little as I do in Painting: so, if both Poets and Painters should alternately dislike (but I know the majority of them will not), I am not to regard it at all. But Mr. Hayley approves of my designs as little as he does of my Poems, and I have been forced to insist on his leaving me, in both, to my own self-will; for I am determined to be no longer pestered with his genteel ignorance and polite disapprobation. I know myself both Poet and Painter, and it is not his affected contempt that can move to anything but a more assiduous pursuit of both arts. Indeed, by my late firmness, I have brought down his affected loftiness, and he begins to think I have some genius; as if genius and assurance were the same thing! But his imbecile attempts to depress me only deserve laughter. I say thus much to you, knowing that you will not make a bad use of it. But it is a fact too true that, if I had only depended on mortal things, both myself and my wife must have been lost. I should leave everyone in the country astonished at my patience and forbearance of injuries upon injuries; but I do assure you that, if I could have returned to London a month after my arrival here, I should have done so. But I was commanded by my spiritual friends to bear all and be silent, and to go through without murmuring, and, in fine, [to] hope till my three years should be almost accomplished; at which time I was set at liberty to remonstrate against former conduct, and to demand justice and truth; which I have done in so effectual a manner that my antagonist is silenced completely, and I have compelled what

should have been of freedom—my just right as an artist and as a man. And if any attempt should be made to refuse me this I am inflexible, and will relinquish any engagement of designing at all, unless altogether left to my own judgment, as you, my dear friend, have always left me; for which I shall never cease to honour and respect you.

When we meet, I will perfectly describe to you my conduct and the conduct of others towards me, and you will see that I have laboured hard indeed, and have been borne on angels' wings. Till we meet I beg of God our Saviour to be with you and me, and yours and mine. Pray give my and my wife's love to Mrs. Butts and family, and believe me to remain

Yours in truth and sincerity,

WILLIAM BLAKE.

ROBERT BURNS

1759–1796

Burns, like Crabbe, had a hard upbringing, and lived close to the soil: like Crabbe he fell early in love; but unlike Crabbe he was not faithful to his first passion. His father was a sturdy Ayrshire farmer, a man of fine nature, whose struggle to make a living was keen and constant. To this father Burns owed it that, though his schooling was meagre, he grew up well-read. On his father's death (1784) Robert and his brother took the farm of Mossgiel, near Mauchline, and managed by great frugality to make a living. Already he had begun versifying. At Mossgiel began his connection with Jean Armour, whom later (in 1788) he married. So unsuccessful was he with farming that he proposed to emigrate to the West Indies. It was to pay the expenses of the voyage that he published, in July, 1786, at Kilmarnock, *Poems chiefly*

in the Scottish Dialect. The instant success of the modest volume changed all his plans, and, to arrange for a second edition, he went to Edinburgh, where he became the lion of the hour. This period introduced him to the great world, but did not change his simple tastes. In 1788 he returned to Mossgiel, married the girl he had wronged, and took her to the neighbouring county of Dumfries, where he had secured a farm at Ellisland.

Letter 118. Robert Burns to John Murdoch

There is unfortunately a wide difference between the verse and the prose of Burns. In his lyrical verse, as Byron maintains, "the rank of Burns is the very first of his art". But in the prose of classical English Burns is seldom at his ease, and can therefore claim no place among the great letter-writers of his century. The following letter, dated the year before his father's death, was written to his old schoolmaster. Of this period in the poet's life R. L. Stevenson has written: "We can conceive him, in these early years, in that rough moorland country, poor among the poor with his seven pounds a year, looked upon with doubt by respectable elders, but for all that the best talker, the best letter-writer, the most famous lover and confidant, the laureate poet, and the only man who wore his hair tied in the parish".

Lochlea, *January* 15, 1783.

Dear Sir,—

As I have an opportunity of sending you a letter without putting you to that expense which any production of mine would but ill repay, I embrace it with pleasure, to tell you that I have not forgotten, nor ever will forget, the many obligations I lie under to your kindness and friendship.

I do not doubt, sir, but you will wish to know what has been the result of all the pains of an indulgent father, and a masterly teacher; and I wish I could gratify your curiosity with such a recital as you would be pleased with; but that is what

I am afraid will not be the case. I have, indeed, kept pretty clear of vicious habits; and, in this respect, I hope my conduct will not disgrace the education I have gotten; but as a man of the world I am most miserably deficient. One would have thought that, bred as I have been, under a father who has figured pretty well as *un homme des affaires*, I might have been what the world calls a pushing, active fellow; but to tell you the truth, sir, there is hardly anything more my reverse. I seem to be one sent into the world to see and observe; and I very easily compound with the knave who tricks me of my money, if there be anything original about him, which shows me human nature in a different light from anything I have seen before. In short, the joy of my heart is to "study men, their manners, and their ways", and for this darling subject I cheerfully sacrifice every other consideration. I am quite indolent about those great concerns that set the bustling, busy sons of care agog; and if I have to answer for the present hour, I am very easy with regard to anything further. Even the last, worst shift of the unfortunate and the wretched does not much terrify me; I know that even then my talent for what country folks call "a sensible crack", when once it is sanctified by a hoary head, would procure me so much esteem that even then I would learn to be happy. However, I am under no apprehensions about that; for though indolent, yet so far as an extremely delicate constitution permits, I am not lazy; and in many things, especially in tavern matters, I am a strict economist,—not, indeed, for the sake of the money, but one of the principal parts in my composition is a kind of pride of

stomach; and I scorn to fear the face of any man living; above everything, I abhor as hell the idea of sneaking into a corner to avoid a dun—possibly some pitiful, sordid wretch, who in my heart I despise and detest. 'Tis this, and this alone, that endears economy to me. In the matter of books, indeed, I am very profuse. My favourite authors are of the sentimental kind, such as Shenstone, particularly his *Elegies*; Thomson; *Man of Feeling*, a book I prize next to the Bible; *Man of the World*; Sterne, especially his *Sentimental Journey*; Macpherson's *Ossian*, &c.;—these are the glorious models after which I endeavour to form my conduct; and 'tis incongruous, 'tis absurd, to suppose that the man whose mind glows with sentiments lighted up at their sacred flame, the man whose heart distends with benevolence to all the human race,—he "who can soar above this little scene of things",—can descend to mind the paltry concerns about which the terræ-filial race fret, and fume, and vex themselves! Oh, how the glorious triumph swells my heart! I forget that I am a poor, insignificant devil, unnoticed and unknown, stalking up and down fairs and markets, when I happen to be in them, reading a page or two of mankind, and "catching the manners living as they rise", whilst the men of business jostle me on every side, as an idle encumbrance in their way. But I dare say I have by this time tired your patience; so I shall conclude with begging you to give Mrs. Murdoch —not my compliments, for that is a mere commonplace story, but my warmest, kindest wishes for her welfare; and accept of the same for yourself, from, dear sir, yours, R. B.

Letter 119. Sylvander (Robert Burns) to Clarinda (Mrs. M'Lehose)

Existence for Burns was incomplete without an affair of the heart: and, where this did not come by nature, he was capable, to use his own words, of "battering himself into a warm affection". In December, 1787, he met, at a tea-party in Edinburgh, Mrs. Agnes M'Lehose. She was married, about his age, with two children, but had been deserted by her husband. On the whole, Stevenson is inclined to think she was "the best woman Burns encountered". Mrs. M'Lehose sent him an invitation to tea, but an accident confined him for a month to his room, and the famous Sylvander-Clarinda correspondence began. It is an "absurd interchange of gasping epistles" which does little credit to either party. The opening letter is given below. The correspondence caused pain and suspicion to Clarinda's friends, and ended in making her fonder of Burns than she wished to be.

[Edinburgh], *Saturday Evening* [*Dec.*, 1787].

I can say with truth, Madam, that I never met with a person in my life whom I more anxiously wished to meet again than yourself. To-night I was to have had that very great pleasure. I was intoxicated with the idea; but an unlucky fall from a coach has so bruised one of my knees, that I cannot stir my leg; so, if I do not see you again I shall not rest in my grave for chagrin. I was vexed to the soul I had not seen you sooner. I determined to cultivate your friendship with the enthusiasm of religion; but thus has fortune ever served me. I cannot bear the idea of leaving Edinburgh without seeing you. I know not how to account for it, I am strangely taken with some people; nor am I often mistaken. You are a stranger to me; but I am an odd being. Yet some unnamed feelings, things, not principles,

but better than whims, carry me farther than boasted reason ever did a philosopher.

Farewell! every happiness be yours!

Letter 120. Robert Burns to Mrs. Dunlop

In November, 1786, Burns, abandoning his proposal to emigrate, went to Edinburgh. The Edinburgh edition of his *Poems* came out in April, 1787. His Kilmarnock volume had brought him good friends in his own county. One of the best was Mrs. Dunlop. She had read *The Cottar's Saturday Night* with pleasure and surprise, and sent off an express at once to Mossgiel, sixteen miles distant, to ask for six copies, and to invite the poet to Dunlop House. This led to a friendly correspondence, which lasted his lifetime, and was to him a constant source of cheer.

Edinburgh, *March* 22, 1787.

Madam,—

I read your letter with watery eyes. A little, very little while ago, I had scarce a friend but the stubborn pride of my own bosom; now I am distinguished, patronized, befriended by you. Your friendly advices, I will not give them the cold name of criticisms, I receive with reverence. I have made some small alteration in what I before had printed. I have the advice of some very judicious friends among the literati here; but with them I sometimes find it necessary to claim the privilege of thinking for myself. The noble Earl of Glencairn, to whom I owe more than to any man, does me the honour of giving me his strictures: his hints, with respect to impropriety, or indelicacy, I follow implicitly.

You kindly interest yourself in my future views and prospects; there I can give you no light. It is all

> Dark as was chaos, ere the infant sun
> Was roll'd together, or had tried his beams
> Athwart the gloom profound.

The appellation of a Scottish bard is by far my highest pride; to continue to deserve it is my most exalted ambition. Scottish themes and Scottish story are the themes I could wish to sing. I have no dearer aim than to have it in my power, unplagued with the routine of business, for which, heaven knows, I am unfit enough, to make leisurely pilgrimages through Caledonia; to sit on the fields of her battles; to wander on the romantic banks of her rivers; and to muse by the stately towers or venerable ruins, once the honoured abodes of her heroes. But these are all utopian thoughts. I have dallied long enough with life; 'tis time to be in earnest. I have a fond, an aged mother to care for; and some other bosom ties perhaps equally tender. Where the individual only suffers by the consequences of his own thoughtlessness, indolence, or folly, he may be excusable; nay, shining abilities, and some of the nobler virtues, may half sanctify a heedless character; but where God and nature have intrusted the welfare of others to his care—where the trust is sacred, and the ties are dear, that man must be far gone in selfishness, or strangely lost to reflection, whom these connexions will not rouse to exertion.

I guess that I shall clear two or three hundred pounds by my authorship; with that sum I intend, so far as I may be said to have any intention, to return to my old acquaintance the plough; and, if I can meet with a lease by which I can live, to commence farmer. I do not intend to give up poetry; being bred to labour secures me inde-

pendence, and the Muses are my chief, sometimes have been my only enjoyment. If my practice second my resolution, I shall have principally at heart the serious business of life; but while following my plough, or building up my shocks, I shall cast a leisure glance to that dear—that only feature of my character, which gave me the notice of my country and the patronage of a Wallace.

Thus, honoured Madam, I have given you the bard, his situation, and his views, native as they are in his own bosom. R. B.

Letter 121. Robert Burns to Robert Graham

Burns met Robert Graham of Fintry in 1787, and found in him a good friend to the last. Graham was a Commissioner of the Board of Excise, and by his kind offices Burns, after settling at Ellisland, was appointed exciseman with £70 a year. His wide district could be covered only by "riding two hundred miles every week through ten moorland parishes". At the close of 1791, finding his farm a "ruinous affair", he gave it up and settled in Dumfries with only his income as exciseman. In February, 1792, he assisted in the capture of a smuggler, and bought, at the sale of the vessel, four carronades, which he dispatched to Paris with a letter to the French Assembly. These were stopped at Dover by English officials. The Board of Excise ordered an enquiry to be made into his conduct. In fear of dismissal, Burns appealed to Graham. The matter closed with a reprimand. Burns was informed that, as an official, he must obey the Government and be silent—a bitter humiliation to his proud spirit.

December, 1792.

Sir,—

I have been surprised, confounded, and distracted by Mr. Mitchel, the collector, telling me that he has received an order from your board to

inquire into my political conduct, and blaming me as a person disaffected to government.

Sir, you are a husband—and a father. You know what you would feel to see the much-loved wife of your bosom, and your helpless, prattling little ones, turned adrift into the world, degraded and disgraced from a situation in which they had been respectable and respected, and left almost without the necessary support of a miserable existence. Alas, sir! must I think that such soon will be my lot! and from the d——d, dark insinuations of hellish, groundless envy, too! I believe, sir, I may aver it, and in the sight of Omniscience, that I would not tell a deliberate falsehood, no, not though even worse horrors, if worse can be, than those I have mentioned, hung over my head; and I say, that the allegation, whatever villain has made it, is a lie! To the British constitution, on Revolution principles, next after my God, I am most devoutly attached. You, sir, have been much and generously my friend. Heaven knows how warmly I have felt the obligation and how gratefully I have thanked you. Fortune, sir, has made you powerful, and me impotent; has given you patronage, and me dependence. I would not for my single self call on your humanity; were such my insular, unconnected situation, I would despise the tear that now swells in my eye—I could brave misfortune, I could face ruin; for at the worst, "Death's thousand doors stand open"; but, good God! the tender concerns that I have mentioned, the claims and ties that I see at this moment, and feel around me, how they unnerve courage and wither resolution! To your patronage, as a man of some genius, you have allowed me a claim; and

your esteem, as an honest man, I know is my due: to these, sir, permit me to appeal; by these may I adjure you to save me from that misery which threatens to overwhelm me, and which, with my latest breath I will say it, I have not deserved.

R. B.

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

1772–1834.

Coleridge was born at Ottery St. Mary, in Devonshire, where his father was vicar. Sent at the age of ten to Christ's Hospital, he remained there for nine years, having Charles Lamb among his schoolfellows. Even at school he distinguished himself by the cleverness of his talk. He entered Jesus College, Cambridge, as a sizar in 1791. Like most ardent natures of that day, he was fired by revolutionary views. Visiting Oxford in 1794, he swooped down on Southey, at that time a leisurely student at Baliol, and won over that more cautious nature by his glowing picture of an ideal community to be founded in America. In October, 1795, however, he married Sarah Fricker, and her quiet, almost dull, nature somewhat quenched the ardour of the projector. Coleridge tried preaching in Unitarian churches: he attempted newspaper work, starting the *Watchman*, which ran for ten numbers. Cottle, the Bristol publisher, gave him in advance thirty guineas for a volume of poems which appeared in 1796. His lifelong friendship with Wordsworth began probably in the same year, and their joint venture, the *Lyrical Ballads*, was published in 1798.

Letter 122. S. T. Coleridge to Robert Southey

It was in June, 1794, that Coleridge met Southey at Oxford and sketched the socialistic Utopia which they were to found somewhere on the banks of the Susquehanna. The programme of pantisocracy is given in the *Life* of Southey by his son Charles. "Their plan was to collect as many brother adventurers as they could, and to establish a community in

the New World upon the most thoroughly social basis. Land was to be purchased with their common contributions, and to be cultivated by their common labour. Each was to have his portion of work assigned him; and they calculated that a large part of their time would still remain for social converse and literary pursuits. The females of the party—for all were to be married men—were to cook and perform all domestic offices; and having even gone so far as to plan the architecture of their cottages and the form of their settlement, they had pictured as pleasant a Utopia as ever entered an ardent mind."

JESUS COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE, *September* 18, 1794.

Well, my dear Southey! I am at last arrived at Jesus. My God! how tumultuous are the movements of my heart. Since I quitted this room what and how important events have been evolved! America! Southey! Miss Fricker! Yes, Southey, you are right. Even Love is the creature of strong motive. . . . Pantisocracy! Oh, I shall have such a scheme of it. My head, my heart, are all alive. I have drawn up my arguments in battle array; they shall have the *tactician* excellence of the mathematician with the enthusiasm of the poet. The head shall be the mass; the heart the fiery spirit that fills, informs, and agitates the whole. SHAD GOES WITH US. HE IS MY BROTHER. I am longing to be with you: make Edith my sister. Surely, Southey, we shall be *frendotatoi meta frendous*—most friendly where all are friends. She must, therefore, be more emphatically my sister.

Brookes and Berdmore, as I suspected, have spread my opinions in mangled forms at Cambridge. Caldwell, the most pantisocratic of aristocrats, has been laughing at me. Up I arose, terrible in reasoning. He fled from me, because "he could not answer for his own sanity, sitting

so near a madman of genius". He told me that the strength of my imagination had intoxicated my reason, and that the acuteness of my reason had given a directing influence to my imagination. Four months ago the remark would not have been more elegant than just. Now it is nothing.

I like your sonnets exceedingly—the best of any I have yet seen. "Though to the eye fair is the extended vale" should be "to the eye though fair the extended vale". I by no means disapprove of discord introduced to produce *effect*, nor is my ear so fastidious as to be angry with it where it could not have been avoided without weakening the sense. But discord for discord's sake is rather too licentious.

"Wild wind" has no other but alliterative beauty; it applies to a storm, not to the autumnal breeze that makes the trees rustle mournfully. Alter it to "That rustle to the sad wind moaningly". . . .

I will write you a huge, big letter next week. At present I have to transact the tragedy business, to wait on the Master, to write to Mrs. Southey, Lovell, &c.

God love you, and S. T. COLERIDGE.

LETTER 123. S. T. COLERIDGE TO JOSEPH COTTLE

Southey's home was in Bristol, and his friendship led Coleridge to settle there for a time, until the pantisocratic scheme should perfect itself. Meanwhile various plans were tried for securing a modest living. Coleridge was ready to attempt anything that had a literary flavour. He was by turns lecturer, journalist, Unitarian preacher, and he had a project for starting a school. All through this period "the

prim and priggish Cottle", as Leslie Stephen calls him, was Coleridge's friend and confidant.

[*August?*], 1795

DEAR COTTLE,—

Shall I trouble you (I being over the mouth and nose, in doing something of importance, at ——'s) to send your servant into the market and buy a pound of bacon, and two quarts of broad beans; and when he carries it down to College Street, to desire the maid to dress it for dinner, and tell her I shall be home by three o'clock? Will you come and drink tea with me? and I will endeavour to get the &c. ready for you.

Yours affectionately,

S. T. C.

LETTER 124. S. T. COLERIDGE TO JOSEPH COTTLE

REDCLIFF HILL, *February* 22, 1796.

MY DEAR SIR,—

It is my duty and business to thank God for all his dispensations, and to believe them the best possible; but, indeed, I think I should have been more thankful, if he had made me a journeyman shoemaker, instead of an author by trade. I have left my friends; I have left plenty; I have left that ease which would have secured a literary immortality, and have enabled me to give the public works conceived in moments of inspiration, and polished them with leisurely solicitude; and, alas! for what have I left them? for —— who deserted me in the hour of distress, and for a scheme of virtue impracticable and romantic! So

I am forced to write for bread; write the flights of poetic enthusiasm, when every minute I am hearing a groan from my wife. Groans, and complaints, and sickness! The present hour I am in a quick-set hedge of embarrassment, and whichever way I turn a thorn runs into me! The future is cloud and thick darkness! Poverty, perhaps, and the thin faces of them that want bread, looking up to me! Nor is this all. My happiest moments for composition are broken in upon by the reflection that I must make haste. I am too late! I am already months behind! I have received my pay beforehand! Oh, wayward and desultory spirit of genius! Ill canst thou brook a taskmaster! The tenderest touch from the hand of obligation wounds thee like a scourge of scorpions.

I have been composing in the fields this morning, and came home to write down the first rude sheet of my preface, when I heard that your man had brought a note from you. I have not seen it, but I guess its contents. I am writing as fast as I can. Depend on it you shall not be out of pocket for me! I feel what I owe you, and independently of this I love you as a friend; indeed, so much, that I regret, seriously regret, that you have been my copyholder.

If I have written petulantly, forgive me. God knows I am sore all over. God bless you, and believe me that, setting gratitude aside, I love and esteem you, and have your interest at heart full as much as my own.

S. T. Coleridge.

Letter 125. S. T. Coleridge to Joseph Cottle

The date of Coleridge's meeting with Wordsworth is uncertain. It may have been in the autumn of 1795; all the evidence tends to show that it must have been before May, 1796. By the spring of 1797 Coleridge was settled at Nether Stowey, where he hoped to make a living by growing vegetables for the market. The following letter describes a momentous visit paid by him to Wordsworth and to Dorothy, Wordsworth's "exquisite sister", as Coleridge called her. Coleridge recited to them his tragedy *Osorio* (afterwards named *Remorse*), and listened, in his own rapturous way, to Wordsworth's tragedy *The Borderers*.

June, 1797.

My dear Cottle,—

I am sojourning, for a few days, at Racedown, the mansion of our friend Wordsworth. He returns you his acknowledgments, and presents his kindliest respects to you. . . .

Wordsworth admires my tragedy, which gives me great hopes. Wordsworth has written a tragedy himself. I speak with heartfelt sincerity, and (I think) unblinded judgment, when I tell you that I feel myself *a little man by his side*, and yet I do not think myself the less man than I formerly thought myself. His drama is absolutely wonderful. You know I do not commonly speak in such abrupt and unmingled phrases, and therefore will the more readily believe me. There are in the piece those *profound* touches of the human heart, which I find three or four times in "The Robbers" of Schiller, and often in Shakspeare, but in Wordsworth there are no *inequalities*. T. Poole's opinion of Wordsworth is that he is the greatest man he ever knew. I coincide. It is not impos-

sible that in the course of two or three months I may see you.

God bless you, and S. T. COLERIDGE.

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

1770–1850

Wordsworth, child of hills and dales, was a native of Cumberland, and came of good north-country stock. He got his schooling at Hawkshead, and entered St. John's, Cambridge, in his eighteenth year. He graduated in 1791 without making any mark at the University. Filled with the ardour of the French Revolution, he went to France for a year, but was driven home by the Reign of Terror. After a period spent in London, he took a house at Racedown, in Dorset. Here befell, in 1796, his meeting with Coleridge, who was then residing at Nether Stowey, in Somerset, at the foot of the Quantocks. Attracted by Coleridge, Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy removed to Alfoxden, some three miles from Stowey, their "principal inducement", as they confessed, being Coleridge's society. "We are three people," wrote Coleridge, "but only one soul." In November, 1797, the proposal of a joint publication was mooted. The generous Bristol publisher, Cottle, agreed to give thirty guineas for the volume, and the result was the epoch-making *Lyrical Ballads*, which appeared in September, 1798. As Professor Dowden remarks, "A volume which opens with *The Ancient Mariner* and closes with the *Lines written a few miles above Tintern Abbey* may well be considered one of the most remarkable in the whole range of English poetry."

LETTER 126. WILLIAM WORDSWORTH TO JOSEPH COTTLE

Bristol has reason to be proud of its citizen Joseph Cottle. This good-natured publisher acted as a kind of literary providence to the three Lake Poets—Southey, Coleridge, and Wordsworth—each of them getting thirty guineas from him

for an early venture. On the invitation of Coleridge, Cottle visited Stowey in 1797, and was introduced to Wordsworth, who read to him many lyrical pieces, "when", writes Cottle, "I perceived in them a peculiar but decided merit". He urged publication, and expressed the gratification he felt in becoming the publisher of the first efforts of three such poets.

ALLFOXDEN, *12th April*, 1798.

MY DEAR COTTLE,—

. . . You will be pleased to hear that I have gone on very rapidly adding to my stock of poetry. Do come and let me read it to you under the old trees in the park. We have a little more than two months to stay in this place. Within these four days the season has advanced with greater rapidity than I ever remember, and the country becomes almost every hour more lovely.

God bless you.

Your affectionate friend,

W. WORDSWORTH.

LETTER 127. WILLIAM WORDSWORTH TO JOSEPH COTTLE

Lyrical Ballads was published in September, 1798. Cottle states that the "heavy sale" of the book caused him to sell the greater part of the impression of five hundred copies at a loss to Arch, a bookseller in London. The following winter was spent by Coleridge and the Wordsworths in Germany, the former settling at Göttingen, the latter at Goslar. In April the Wordsworths returned to England, and, their plans being uncertain, resided for a time with their friends the Hutchinsons at Sockburn-on-Tees. Wordsworth now felt drawn permanently to his lakes and mountains. Coleridge rejoined him, and, on a walking tour made by the pair in October, Wordsworth fell in love with Dove Cottage, Grasmere. Here he made the home to which in 1802 he brought

his bride, Mary Hutchinson. In this cottage was written much of the best of his poetry, including *The Prelude* and most of *The Excursion*. Rydal Mount, associated with his later years, became his home in 1813.

24 *June* (1799), SOCKBURN, NEAR NORTHALLERTON, YORKSHIRE. To be left at Smeaton.

MY DEAR COTTLE,—

I received your letter enclosing a £5 Bank note. I am in want of money: I shall therefore be obliged to you, if you will remit to *me* (not to my Brother as I before requested) the remaining £15 as soon as you can without inconvenience. Most probably your statement is accurate; for myself I recollect nothing about it. What I told you was from Dorothy's memory, and she is by no means certain about it.

You tell me the poems have not sold ill. If it is possible, I should wish to know *what number* have been sold.

From what I can gather it seems that *The Ancyent Marinere* has upon the whole been an injury to the volume, I mean that the old words and the strangeness of it have deterred readers from going on. If the volume should come to a second edition, I would put in its place some little things which would be more likely to suit the common taste.

When you send the money, pray look over this letter and reply to this part of it.

I shall be obliged to you, if you will send me three copies of the *Ballads* enclosed in your parcel to Charles Lloyd. I shall easily get them from Penrith.

We are highly gratified by the affectionate wish which you express to see us again in Somersetshire. We are as yet not determined where we shall settle. We have no particular house in view, so it is impossible for us to say when we shall have the pleasure of meeting you.

Dorothy sends her very kind love to you. God bless you, my dear Cottle.

Your affectionate friend,

W. WORDSWORTH.

P.S.—We thank you for your care of our box: we do not at present want any of its contents.

We have never heard from Coleridge since our arrival in England. We are anxious for news of him. I hope he is coming home, as he does not write to us.

LETTER 128. WILLIAM WORDSWORTH TO SIR GEORGE BEAUMONT

From the first, Wordsworth as a poet was a serious thinker on the questions of life. His spiritual attitude had much of the prophetic, and, like a prophet, he accepted his call and felt under obligation to obey. With this earnest view of life, he enjoyed hours of strange exaltation. "Fits of poetic inspiration", says Aubrey de Vere, "descended on him like a cloud; and, till the cloud had drifted, he could see nothing beyond." On these occasions he was, to use his own words, "exalted to the highest pitch of delight by the joyousness and beauty of nature". Alike the prophet and the poet in him won the regard of the best men of his time, and his small circle of friends was warm-hearted and reverent. In 1803 he made a valuable friend in Sir George Beaumont, who, until his death in 1827, took a cordial interest in the welfare of the poet. Sir George was a connoisseur of painting, led Wordsworth to study this branch of art, and so helped to widen his

æsthetic sympathies. At his death, Sir George left Wordsworth an annuity of £100.

GRASMERE, *February* 20, 1805.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—

My father, who was an attorney of considerable eminence, died intestate when we were children; and the chief of his personal property after his decease was expended in an unsuccessful attempt to compel the late Lord Lonsdale to pay a debt of about £5000 to my father's estate. Enough, however, was scraped together to educate us all in different ways. I, the second son, was sent to college with a view to the profession of the church or law; into one of which I should have been forced by necessity, had not a friend left me £900. The bequest was from a young man with whom, though I call him friend, I had had but little connexion; and the act was done entirely from a confidence on his part that I had powers and attainments which might be of use to mankind. This I have mentioned, because it was his due, and I thought the fact would give you pleasure. Upon the interest of the £900, £400 being laid out in annuity, with £200 deducted from the principal, and £100 a legacy to my sister, and £100 more which the *Lyrical Ballads* have brought me, my sister and I contrived to live seven years, nearly eight. Lord Lonsdale then died, and the present Lord Lowther paid to my father's estate £8500. Of this sum I believe £1800 apiece will come to my sister and myself; at least, would have come: but £3000 was lent out to our poor brother, I mean taken from the whole sum, which was about £1200 more than his share, which £1200 belonged to my sister and me. This £1200 we freely lent

him: whether it was insured or no, I do not know; but I dare say it will prove to be the case; we did not, however, stipulate for its being insured. But you shall faithfully know all particulars as soon as I have learned them.

NOTES

Letter 1

page 1. The Faery Queen was published in 1590 by William Ponsonby, who issued in the same year Sidney's *Arcadia*. The title ran: "THE FAERIE QUEENE, Disposed into twelve books, Fashioning XII Morall vertues". Three books only appeared in 1590. They were dedicated to the queen, and were followed in the original edition by this letter to Raleigh, together with six poetical laudations by Raleigh, Harvey, and other friends. The second three books were issued, also by Ponsonby, in 1595. Of Book VII two cantos were printed in 1611. The remainder, if written, never appeared. The publication of the first part led Queen Elizabeth to grant Spenser a pension of £50 a year, in spite of the opposition of Burleigh, the Lord Treasurer, who protested: "All this for a song!"

2. Allegory, saying one thing under the form of another (Gk. ἀλληγορία). Probably its earliest appearance as an English word is in Wyclif's New Testament, *Gal.* iv, 24.

2. by you commanded. In 1589 Spenser was visited in his Irish residence at Kilcolman Castle by Sir Walter Raleigh. *The Faery Queen* had been commenced by the year 1580; and at least three books were finished. These Spenser read to Raleigh, no doubt explaining the structure of the whole. The two friends had much talk over the matter, and Raleigh suggested that, when the first part was published, it should be accompanied by a scheme of the whole poem.

2. by accidents, casual or incidental details. *By* is here an adjective. Sidney in his *Apologie for Poesie* uses *by turnings* = branch roads, side issues.

2. I have followed. In his *Faery Queen* Spenser followed primarily the two great romantic poets of Italy, especially Ariosto, hoping to improve on these models by the introduction of allegory. He early confided to his Cambridge friend, Gabriel Harvey, his desire to rival or even "overgo" Ariosto. He has far surpassed Ariosto in the purity of his chivalry.

2. Ariosto. Ludovico Ariosto of Lombardy (1474–1533) composed the narrative epic *Orlando Furioso* (i.e. Roland in frenzy), a stupendous poem in forty-six cantos, comprising over forty thousand lines. The incidents of the story centre round the siege of Paris by the Saracens, and unfold the adventures of a favourite champion of medieval legend,

Charlemagne's paladin Roland (or Hrodland), the Frankish warrior whom the Italians styled Orlando. Orlando falls in love with Angelica, a pagan princess sent from the East to foment discord among the Christian knights. Angelica rejects Orlando's suit, marries a Moor, and returns to India. The news of her flight throws Orlando into a frenzy. His wits are carried away to the moon; but, after a period of three months, they are retrieved in romantic fashion by Astolpho, who brings them to the hero in an urn. After inhaling them, Orlando is found to be cured both of frenzy and of love. The poem teems with amazing anachronisms, but fascinates by the breathless rapidity with which change of scene and incident is brought about. Ariosto piles story on story, adventure on adventure. "He whirls the reader in two lines from one end of the world to the other." Byron makes an apt comparison between Ariosto and Sir Walter Scott:

> Who, like the Ariosto of the North,
> Sang ladye-love and war, romance and knightly worth.

2. Tasso. Torquato Tasso (1544–95) takes rank as one of the world's great poets by his noble Christian epic, *Gerusalemme Liberata* (Jerusalem Delivered). It deals with the story of the First Crusade, having Godfrey (Goffredo or Godfredo) of Bouillon as its chief hero. By the time Tasso was thirty the poem was complete. Almost from its publication it was regarded as a classic. At the age of eighteen Tasso wrote the adventures of *Rinaldo* in a narrative poem named after that champion. Rinaldo appears also in the *Gerusalemme Liberata* as a doughty warrior—"the Achilles of the Christian army". Many parts of the *Faery Queen* are suggested by passages in Tasso's epic. "But the *Faery Queen* lacks the swift movement, the compelling force, the warm atmosphere, laden with love and startled by the clash of arms, the glow and the life of the *Gerusalemme*" (Boulting: *Tasso and his Times*).

3. Xenophon . . . Plato: in the *Cyropaedia* and the *Republic* respectively.

3. the Lady Igrayne. Igrayne or Igerna was the wife of the Duke of Tintagil and afterwards of Uther, King of Britain, to whom she bore Arthur. Tennyson spells her name Ygerne.

3. general intention . . . particular. It is plain that Spenser had not clearly elaborated the details of his splendid design. What Lowell calls the "delicious abundance and over-running luxury" of his material and the variety of the motive cause Spenser's "continued allegory" to break down frequently. To charm a reader, writers like Spenser and Bunyan must lure him to believe in the reality of what he reads. The *Faery Queen* does not, except in the First Book, maintain its story with anything like the verisimilitude of the *Pilgrim's Progress*. Three sources of incoherence are worth attention.

(*a*) With the ethical aim of fashioning "a gentleman or noble person in virtuous and gentle discipline", Spenser took as his model the knight of chivalry, who had already disappeared from the social system. The last authentic glimpse of him in English poetry is to be found in Chaucer. By the sixteenth century the knight had given place to the courtier.

(*b*) The reader is forced to attend, now to the narrative and the ideal figure of the knight, now to contemporary compliments addressed to the queen as Gloriana or Britomart and to Raleigh as Timias.

(*c*) A further ambiguity is caused by the mixture of Christian with pagan imagery, and by the intrusion of classical mythology.

(Cf. *The Cambridge History of English Literature*, Vol. III, pp. 229–37).

3. two persons; in the regular Latin sense of *character*, *part played by an actor*. Cf. *Faery Queen*, Bk. I, canto ii, 11:

> But now seemde best the person to put on
> Of that good knight, his late beguiled guest.

4. your own excellent conceit of Cynthia. "A striking feature of Elizabethan literature is the quantity of admirable verse written by men who were in no sense professional men of letters", courtiers like Sidney and Raleigh being among the chief contributors. Several of Raleigh's poems were printed anonymously in books of other writers, and their authorship has in consequence been called in question. The *Cynthia* appears to have been his most ambitious poetic effort. Banished temporarily from the Court through the jealousy of Elizabeth's favourite, the Earl of Essex, Raleigh occupied himself with this long elegiac poem, in which, addressing the queen as Cynthia, he expresses his devotion and his despair at her anger. Spenser refers to it in *Colin Clout's Come Home Again*, where he says of Raleigh:

> His song was all a lamentable lay
> Of great unkindness, and of usage hard,
> Of Cynthia the Lady of the Sea.

The *Cynthia* was never published. It is not certain that Elizabeth ever saw it. It is lost save for one fragment of 500 lines discovered in recent years and published in 1870, entitled "The twenty-first and last book of the Ocean to Cynthia". Raleigh speaks of himself as Ocean, Spenser having called him "The Shepherd of the Ocean". If the other twenty books were on the scale of the fragment, the *Cynthia* must have totalled nearly 12,000 lines, and rivalled the *Odyssey* in length.

4. Magnificence is seemingly the equivalent of Aristotle's μεγαλοψυχία, lofty-mindedness or magnanimity, a noble form of self-respect, which Aristotle regards as the crown (κόσμος) of all the other virtues (*Nic. Eth.*, iv, 3, 16). Spenser follows Cicero, who apparently uses *magnificentia* to render the Greek term (cf. *De Off.*, i, 21, 72) in preference to *magnanimitas*.

4. the twelve other virtues. The first six virtues in the list of twelve given by Aristotle are Courage, Temperance, Liberality, Munificence, Magnanimity, and Just Ambition. The virtues dealt with in the six books of the *Faery Queen* are Holiness, Temperance, Chastity, Friendship, Justice, and Courtesy. Spenser therefore followed a classification of his own. The cantos published posthumously, entitled *Of Mutability*, are said to be part of a seventh book, on Constancy. Five more books were planned to complete the tale of the "twelve private moral

virtues". A portion is said to have been written and to have perished, with one of Spenser's infant children, in that sack of his beautiful home at Kilcolman Castle which drove the poet back to England, a ruined and broken-hearted man. The poem in its present state is thus about one-fourth of Spenser's complete project.

4. Historiographer, used in the same sense as historian, with which word it was for about a century to run a race for preference.

6. eftsoons in Spenser generally means *forthwith*. In Wiclif's New Testament, however, it is used regularly in the sense of *again*.

7. the whole intention of the conceit. As Professor Courthope points out, Spenser fails in the end to redeem his promise of discovering "the general intent and meaning" of the *Faery Queen*. His concern is rather to explain the artistic structure than to point the moral of his allegory. One single sentence states the general purpose of the work—"to fashion a gentleman or noble person in virtuous and gentle discipline". The rest of the letter sets forth the theme and machinery of the story. On the whole, this is in keeping with Spenser's main object, which was not moral but literary—to produce an attractive English variety of the Italian Romantic Epic.

Letter 2

page 8. in your power. Sir Walter Cope (died 1614) was a man of substance with a grand house at Kensington. In 1609 he attained the position of Chamberlain of the Exchequer, and, being a strong partisan of Sir Robert Cecil, was one from whose influence Raleigh might reasonably expect good results.

8. a prisoner with me. Raleigh was tried for treason before a special commission (Nov., 1603) and convicted on the unconfirmed and often retracted evidence of Lord Cobham. He was sent to the Tower, forfeiting all his offices and estates, but retaining his personal property. At first he was treated leniently. He had his own set of apartments, where he lived with his wife, his little son Wat, and three personal servants. For household expenses he was given a state allowance of £5 a week. In the Tower garden he was allowed the use of an old fowlhouse as a laboratory, where he amused himself with chemical experiments and discovered a mode of distilling fresh from salt water. He gave much time to the composition of his *History of the World*. This was published in March, 1614, but must have made good progress by 1611, for in April of that year notice is given of it in the registers of the Stationers' Company.

8. divided from me. In 1610 some fresh charge was laid against Raleigh by his enemies. Its nature was not divulged. Cecil was called in to examine Raleigh. A sentence of close arrest followed. Lady Raleigh was ordered to leave the Tower, and was not allowed to return for three months.

8. Sir Robert Cecil (1563?–1612), son of William Cecil, Lord Burghley (whom he succeeded as Lord Treasurer), was for many years Raleigh's intimate friend. To him Raleigh dedicated his *Discovery of Guiana* (1596). Their common hostility to Essex drew them into

political alliance. On the death of Essex (1601) Cecil began to grow cool, and acted towards Raleigh as a rival. He was apparently jealous of Raleigh's brilliance and popularity.

8. might utterly despair, i.e. cast into despair. The verb active is frequently used at this period. In his *Dialogue between a Jesuit and a Recusant,* Raleigh has the phrase "to despair all his faithful subjects".

Letter 3

page 10. N. White, with his nephew Harry, mentioned at the close of the letter, was apparently in attendance on Robert Sidney. This passage seems to refer to some sharp words used by Sidney's father, at which Harry White took umbrage.

10. countenance, standing, dignity. In a book dated 1523 we read of a "gentleman's countenance and household".

10. bravery, ostentation. Holland, in his translation of Livy (xxxiv, 4) speaks of the "wasteful and sumptuous bravery of women".

10. Mr. Savile, afterwards Sir Henry Savile (1549–1622), the most learned layman of his time; Fellow and then Warden of Merton College, and a distinguished lecturer on Mathematics at Oxford. In 1578 he went travelling on the Continent in search of manuscripts (subsequently presented to the Bodleian Library), and on his return was for a time tutor to Queen Elizabeth in Greek and Mathematics. He founded at Oxford lectures on Mathematics and Astronomy. He was one of the New Testament translators for preparing the "Authorized Version".

10. Boden, a mistake (probably of the transcriber) for *Bodin.* Jean Bodin or Bodinus (1530–96) was a French writer of high repute on history and politics. His main title to fame is his *La Republique,* in six books, published at Paris, 1576. In 1581 Bodin came to England in the train of the Duke of Alençon, and found this work already used as a textbook at Cambridge. "From the time when Aristotle wrote his eight books of *Politics*", says Sir William Hamilton, "until the time when Montesquieu wrote his thirty-one books on the *Spirit of Laws,* the six books of the *Republic* of Bodinus is the ablest and most remarkable treatise extant on the philosophy of government and legislation; and even until the present day these three authors stand out as the great political triumvirate."

10. appendances, adjuncts, attendant circumstances. Cf. Hale in his *Contemplations* (1676): "Even such a tranquility of mind hath certain appendances to it that abate that sincereness of happiness".

10. seriem temporum, the sequence of periods.

10. Tarchagnora, apparently a mistake of the transcriber for *Tarcagnota.* This letter is one of several of Sidney's transcribed at Penshurst by Arthur Collins, and printed in his two folio volumes of *Letters and Memorials* (1745). There can be little doubt that he has failed to decipher Sidney's handwriting in this and other passages. Giovanne Tarcagnota was an Italian historian, who was born at Gaeta

towards the end of the fifteenth century, and died in 1566. His chief historical work was *Dell 'Istorie del Mondo* in four volumes (Venice, 1562), a heroic but not very successful attempt at a world-history based on the study of national records.

10. Languet. Hubert Languet (1518–81), a close friend of Sidney and a bold political writer, was born in Burgundy. He was won to Protestantism by Melanchthon, whom he met at Wittemberg in 1549, and took service with the Prince of Orange. He corresponded freely in Latin with Sidney; and his letters were published at Frankfort in 1636 under the title: *Epistolae politicae et historicae ad Philipp. Sydnaeum.* He was in Paris at the massacre of St. Bartholomew, but effected his escape. The reference in the text is probably to his *Historica Descriptio* (1568). His most famous work was *Vindiciae contra Tyrannos* (Defence against Despots), a favourite book with Oliver Cromwell. Sidney's affection for Languet is shown in some verses in the *Arcadia.*

> The song I sang old Languet had me taught,
> Languet the shepherd best swift Ister knew
> For clerkly rede, and hating what is naught,
> For faithful heart, clean hands, and mouth as true;
> With his sweet skill my skilless youth he drew
> To have a feeling taste of Him that sits
> Beyond the heaven, far more beyond our wits.

10. to consider by that . . . Some words here in the original have become illegible.

11. successes, results, consequences; used in this sense in the *Apologie for Poetrie,* where Sidney mentions as part of the praise commonly given to the study of history the learning "gotten by marking the success, as though therein a man should see virtue exalted and vice punished".

11. e re nata, according to the circumstances.

11. marked with the note, &c., i.e. noted as having the characteristic of a rhetorical presentation of facts (*note* = distinguishing feature; cf. *Apologie,* "the right describing note to know a poet by").

11. gallantly to be marked, i.e. are boldly to be treated as poetry. This sentence is an echo of the *Poetics* (ix, 2), where Aristotle says that the difference between the Historian and the Poet is that the one tells what actually has happened, the other what might happen.

11. Non simpliciter, &c., i.e. not dealing with the bare event, but with the characteristics and attendant circumstances of the event.

11. and that is it which makes, &c. Sidney's meaning is that the historian writes sometimes for ornament (in this resembling the orator and the poet), sometimes for instruction (in this resembling the discourser). As a discourser his functions merge into those of the divine, the lawyer, and the philosopher. The meaning becomes clearer if we note that the words from "and that" down to "places" are a parenthesis. The loose structure of the whole sentence marks the haste with which the letter was written. Horace Walpole sneeringly says of Sidney's letters that they are "poor matters". They certainly

reveal the busy man of affairs, and are often disfigured by the careless composition of the man who writes because he has to.

11. places in the classical sense, quotations, or general reflections (*loci communes*).

12. to his head, to its class or category.

12. parcel, component part. Bacon in his *Advancement of Learning* (1605) says: "Nothing parcel of the world is denied to man's inquiry and invention".

12. politic, in the sense of πολιτικός, social rather than political. It is similarly used in the *Apologie for Poetrie*: "the knowledge of a man's self, in the ethic and politic consideration", i.e. regarded as a moral and social being.

13. Dion Nicæus, usually called Dion Cassius, was born at Nicæa in Bithynia, 155 A.D. He wrote in Greek a History of Rome from the early times down to the beginning of the reign of Alexander Severus. A Latin translation was first published at Venice in 1526.

13. Stephen, apparently the carrier of the letter.

13. Dutch, i.e. speakers of High and of Low German. To the end of the sixteenth century the word was in general use in the sense of German. As late as 1601 a writer speaks of the time when "the Dutch Knights"—i.e. the Teutonic Knights—were lords of Poland.

13. Ciceronianism; cf. what Sidney says in the *Apologie*, deprecating the phrase-books ("Nizolian Paper-books") compiled by "the diligent imitators of Tully".

13. qui dum verba, &c., who in their pursuit of words disregard the subject-matter.

13. toyful books. Toy is used here (= trifle) as in Shakespeare. Cf. *Macbeth*, ii, 3, 99: "All is but toys". Sidney calls his *Apologie* "this ink-wasting toy of mine". What were these "toyful books"? In the spring of this year (1580), perhaps stirred by having seen a rough sketch of his friend Spenser's *Faery Queen*, he had begun the *Arcadia*, while staying at Wilton with his sister, the Countess of Pembroke, intending the book for her and a small circle of friends. Dr. Shuckburgh has shown that the *Apologie* also was probably written about this time. It is not unlikely that the reference is to manuscript copies of these two works. At his death Sidney desired to have the manuscript of the *Arcadia* destroyed; perhaps he felt the defects of what Milton afterwards (in the heat of controversy) called a "vain amatorious poem". It was published in 1590; the *Apologie* in 1595. All Sidney's writings were printed posthumously. Though "renowned" during his life for both his poetry and his prose, it was through manuscript copies circulated, according to the custom of the time, by himself and his friends.

13. Leicester, i.e. the Earl of Leicester, uncle of Philip and Robert, succeeded in the property and later in the title by Robert.

14. commons, a regular allowance (of victuals), rations. [At Oxford it is the portion of victuals supplied from the buttery or the kitchen at a

fixed rate. One can order "a commons"—or "a half-commons"—of mutton.]

14. jarl, quarrel. The word seems to be a strengthened form of jar, which is used by Shakespeare in the same sense (cf. *Henry VI*, Part I, iii, 2, 70). In one of the poems in the *Arcadia* Sidney writes:

> What if Laelaps a better morsel find
> Than you erst knew? Rather take part with him
> Than jarl.

14. Crison Claudio. It would appear that the transcriber has again misread the original at Penshurst. A long search has failed to trace *Crison* Claudio. A famous book on horses and their treatment, however, was *Il Cavalerizzo* (The Horse-breaker), by Claudio Corte, published at Marseilles and Venice in 1573. It dealt with the nature of the horse and the best mode of breaking and bitting him. An English translation was made by Thomas Bedingfield, and published in 1584 as *The Art of Riding*. Another book of note in its day was *Ordine di Cavalcare* (A Method of Horsemanship), expounding the art of discovering the qualities of horses and mending their vices, by Federico Grisoni (Venice, 1552). One is driven to conclude that Sidney wrote "read Grisoni, Claudio, and a book" &c.

14. curing, treating medically, doctoring. The word was used in this wider sense in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

14. gratior est veniens, &c., *Aen.* v. 344 (with slight change): "Worth is more winsome when it appears in a handsome form".

14. our neighbours' fires, i.e. probably the troubles in Holland, where the Prince of Orange had been put to the ban in June of this year; and in Ireland, where Fitzmaurice, with the aid of Spanish troops, had landed in 1579 and disturbed the south until his overthrow in Nov., 1580. (This revolt—the Desmond rising—was crushed by Lord Grey of Wilton, in whose train Spenser went to Ireland.)

14. Drake's return from his voyage round the world. He set sail Nov., 1577, and returned at the beginning of Oct., 1580, receiving knighthood from Elizabeth for his exploit. [Much secrecy was observed over his return, and the exact day is not known.]

14. Portugal—on the death of the childless King Henry—was annexed by Philip II of Spain (autumn of 1580).

14. brasers, an old spelling of bracers. Bracer was the name given to that part of a suit of armour which covered the arm; subsequently it denoted a guard for the wrist used by archers and fencers. Ascham, in his *Toxophilus*, speaking of the archer, says: "A bracer serveth to save his arm from the stripe of the string".

14. ticks, light touches. The word is the same as *tig*, a game which was formerly called *tick*. Cf. Drayton, *Polyolbion*, Song 30: "At hood-wink, barley-break, at tick, or prison-base".

15. barriers, a low fence, running down the centre of the lists, on opposite sides of which combatants rode, and across which they thrust with their lances. Hence it became the name of a martial exercise of

the sixteenth century. An Act of Henry VIII speaks of "jousts, tourneys, barriers, or other martial feats".

Letter 4

Page 16. disable, disparage, belittle. Cf. *As You Like It*, v, 4, 80: "He disabled my judgment".

16. the Solicitor's place. In 1593 the post of Attorney-General fell vacant. Bacon's claim to the office was pressed upon the queen by the Earl of Essex, his patron, and Lord Burghley, his uncle; but, after waiting till April, 1594, Elizabeth gave the appointment to Coke, then Solicitor-General. Essex thereupon urged Bacon's promotion to the vacant Solicitorship, only to meet with fresh disappointment. Elizabeth was seemingly afraid to advance Bacon because of his brilliance. "She did acknowledge", wrote Essex to Bacon," you had a great wit, and an excellent gift of speech, and much other good learning. But in law, she rather thought you could make show to the utmost of your knowledge, than that you were deep."

17. carriage occurs frequently in seventeenth-century literature in the sense of management, administration.

Letter 5

Page 18. Gray's Inn is one of the four legal societies, dating from the thirteenth century, and situated in the heart of London, with whom rests the right of calling men to the English bar. The others are the Inner and Middle Temple and Lincoln's Inn. Each Inn has its own property, resembling college buildings at Oxford or Cambridge, and comprising rooms, dining-hall, library, and chapel; and is subject to the rule of its own body of Benchers. When barely sixteen, Bacon was admitted to Gray's Inn. About 1580, after his stay in France and his father's death, he took lodgings there. In 1586 he was made a Bencher, and for many years the Inn was his home. Here must have been written many of his *Essays*, the first edition of which appeared in 1597.

18. a full cry, a numerous following. Shakespeare uses cry = a pack of hounds (*Midsummer-Night's Dream*, iv, 1, 131). George Villiers (1592–1628) became the favourite of James in 1615, and was created in rapid succession Earl, then Marquis, then Duke of Buckingham. In 1616 Bacon attached himself closely to Villiers and rose with him.

Letter 6

Page 18. Commissioner of the Union. A favourite project of James I was a perfect union between Scotland and England, so that all his subjects might have identical rights and laws. The question was keenly debated in the House of Commons (1605–7), where Bacon was a trusted leader.

19. in those offences. In April, 1621, Bacon was impeached by the Commons (led by his old rival Coke), and found guilty by the

Lords of receiving bribes as Lord Chancellor from the suitors of his court. He was condemned to pay a fine of £40,000, to be confined to the Tower at the king's pleasure, and to be for ever incapable of sitting in Parliament or holding any public office. After a short imprisonment, James released him, remitted the fine, and later conferred on him a pension of £1800.

19. insinuate, to ingratiate myself. The verb is usually reflexive, but is found in this intransitive form in a play of the year 1592, Marlowe's inferior drama *The Massacre at Paris* (ii, 4): "Now, Madam, must you insinuate with the king".

20. thrice in dignity, i.e. Knighthood (1603), Baron Verulam (1618), Viscount St. Albans (1621).

20. six times in office, i.e. Solicitor-General (1607), Registrar of the Star Chamber (1608), Attorney-General (1612), Privy Councillor (1616), Lord Keeper (1617), Lord High Chancellor (1618).

21. at courtesy, on sufferance. Cf. what Bacon says, in his *History of Henry VII*, of the king's claim: "If he relied upon that title, he could be but a king at courtesy".

21. aversation, aversion. Chapman, in his translation of the *Iliad* (*circ.* 1600), uses it = the act of turning away or retreating. Bacon has it in the ethical sense, as above, in his Essay *Of Friendship*: "Secret hatred and aversation towards society, in any man, hath somewhat of the savage beast".

23. have borne a bag, i.e. by holding responsible office in the Court of Star Chamber and in the Chancery Court.

23. to bear a wallet, to become a tramp or beggar. Oddly enough the common form of this phrase is "to turn to *bag* and wallet". Thus Hakluyt speaks of "the turning to bag and wallet of the infinite number of poor people". [The student should look up the origin of *wallet*.]

Letter 7

Page 24. first heir of my invention. *Venus and Adonis* was entered at Stationers' Hall on April 18, 1593, and published a few weeks later. The printer was Richard Field, a Stratford man. There was no author's name on the title page; it appeared only in the signature of this letter of dedication. Shakespeare's phrase, "first heir", implies that the poem was composed—at least in part—before any of his plays. There is reason for believing that his first dramatic attempt was *Love's Labour's Lost*, which, with the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, is assigned by good authorities to 1591. Mr. Fleay thinks the poem dates from 1588, which seems early. But Shakespeare was slow to publish. Of his works issued during his lifetime, only *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece* were printed with his sanction. He was naturally reluctant to publish the plays, lest the opportunity of the printed page should lessen the number of playgoers. The consequence was that, as there was no law of copyright, if a printer could secure an actor's manuscript version of a play, he printed it without consulting the author.

24. so noble a godfather. The Earl of Southampton (1573–1624), Shakespeare's only patron, was at this time in his twentieth year, distinguished for his physical beauty and gallant bearing, and one of the most brilliant among the younger men at Elizabeth's Court. Shakespeare's biographer Rowe asserts, on the authority of the Cavalier poet Sir William Davenant (1606-88), that at one time Southampton gave Shakespeare "a thousand pounds to enable him to go through with a purchase which he heard he had a mind to". Mr. Lee regards him as the hero so extravagantly praised in Shakespeare's *Sonnets*, most of which he thinks were written in 1594.

24. ear, plough, till. Cf. Holland's *Pliny*, i, 505: "When you ear (the ground) up with the plough". The verb occurs several times in the A.V., e.g. *1 Sam.*, viii, 12. [Indo-Ger. root AR.]

Letter 8

page 25. for the Court. Donne was ordained in his forty-second year (Jan., 1615). In taking orders he gratified the express wish of King James, who soon appointed him one of his chaplains. During the month in which this letter was written Donne was with the king at Cambridge, and, though an Oxford man, received from the University the degree of Doctor of Divinity.

25. Tamworth carrier. Sir Henry Goodere, the intimate friend to whom Donne wrote without reserve, had his seat at Polesworth, in the Forest of Arden (Warwickshire), on the border of which was Tamworth. Packages passing between the two must sometimes have travelled by carrier's wagon, a slow means of communication used by correspondents on roads where the king's posts did not yet run. [See Appendix.] There are over forty letters of Donne's to Goodere. They were collected with others into a volume published in 1654 by his son, *Letters to Several Persons of Honour.*

25. Lady Bedford. See Letter 11. Donne hints at a cloud which had come over his friendship with this generous patron, to whom are addressed seven of his graceful verse *Letters*. Having known him as a wit and a courtier, she doubted his calling to the holy ministry. His poems, the best of which according to Ben Jonson were written by 1598, had been widely circulated in manuscript, and there were some that the countess probably thought scarcely creditable to a divine. Jonson told Drummond of Hawthornden that Donne "since he was made Doctor, seeketh to destroy all his poems".

25. upon this motion, or request. Apparently Donne asked the countess to help him to pay his debts, before he took orders.

26. Dr. Burges. See Letter 5.

26. acception, acceptance. "Acception of persons" is, according to Dr. Murray, "a phrase occurring hundreds of times down to 1700", after which the word is superseded by *acceptance.*

26. an elegy, probably one of the two "On Mistress Boulstred" (Bulstrode) in *Epicedes and Obsequies.* This young lady, one of the queen's ladies-in-waiting, fell sick and died in Lady Bedford's house

(summer, 1609). The countess was touched by Donne's two elegies; and in all likelihood this is the occasion on which she paid his debts. Some of the lines in the first elegy are strikingly typical of Donne.

> O strong and long-lived death, how camest thou in?
> And how without creation didst begin?
>
> How could I think thee nothing, that see now
> In all this All nothing else is, but thou?
> Our births and lives, vices and virtues, be
> Wasteful consumptions, and degrees of thee.
> For we, to live, our bellows wear and breath,
> Nor are we mortal, dying, dead, but death.
> And though thou be'st, O mighty bird of prey,
> So much reclaimed by God, that thou must lay
> All that thou kill'st at His feet, yet doth He
> Reserve but few, and leaves the most to thee.

Ben Jonson told Drummond that he esteemed Donne "the first poet in the world in some things". Was the power of expressing such grim "metaphysical" fancies among the "some things"?

26. to come disengaged, i.e. to enter the ministry free of debt.

26. the Lady where you are, presumably Lady Goodere.

27. a match with Spain. After the deaths of Sir Robert Cecil and Prince Henry, both in 1612, James I altered his foreign policy and began to look for a Spanish bride for Prince Charles, as the security of an active alliance with Spain.

27. wars in the Low Countries. Donne apparently anticipates the outbreak of the Thirty Years' War, 1618.

27. No word of a Parliament. James's second—the "Addled"—Parliament was dissolved hurriedly in June, 1610. For seven years he refused to call another.

27. our Oath of Allegiance, the oath of supremacy and allegiance demanded of all ecclesiastics, judges, and public officials by the Act of Supremacy, 1559. It remained unaltered till 1688.

Letter 9

page 28. besides the poems. Were these printed or in manuscript? In a letter to Sir Henry Goodere, Dec., 1614, Donne writes: "I am brought to a necessity of printing my poems. This I mean to do forthwith . . . at mine own cost a few copies. . . . I must do this as a valediction to the world before I take orders." Of this small edition—if it was ever printed—not a single copy is now known. Mr. Chambers, Donne's editor in the Muses' Library, doubts the existence of any such book, and holds that, "with the exception of *An Anatomy of the World*, the *Elegy on Prince Henry*, and two or three sets of commendatory and other verses", none of his poetry was printed, until the collection of 1633 was made after his death.

28. written by Jack Donne, and so before Jan., 1615, when he took orders.

Letter 10

page 30. arrived safely. Jonson sailed from Leith late in January, 1619, and, travelling leisurely, reached London at the end of April.

30. the purpose of my book. Jonson's visit to Scotland suggested all kinds of literary plans. He told Drummond he had in design a poetic narrative of "his foot-pilgrimage", with all the adventures, to be called *A Discovery*. He composed verses on Edinburgh, of which only one line survives. The sight of Loch Lomond prompted a "fisher or pastoral" play, with the scene laid on its banks. It would seem, however, that the book here mentioned was to be a prose description of incidents and institutions which had caught his attention. A letter of Drummond's implies that a map of the lake was sent to be embodied in the book.

30. the inscriptions at Pinky. Pinkie House, on the west side of Musselburgh, is an ancient mansion, originally a seat of the Abbot of Dunfermline. In 1613 it was largely rebuilt by Lord Seton. Probably some old carved stones and inscriptions were then unearthed, and may have been among the sights exhibited to Jonson.

30. Government of Edinburgh. Jonson received a warm welcome from the literary people of Edinburgh, and in September, 1618, was made a burgess of the city.

30. the Students' method. Jonson was much struck by the differences between the Scottish University system and that of Oxford and Cambridge.

30. Queen's funeral. James's wife, Anne of Denmark, died early in March, 1619. James at the time was lying ill at Newmarket, and it was the middle of April before he could be moved. He did not appear publicly in London till June. If Jonson ever completed the "somewhat in hand" here mentioned, there appears to be no trace of its publication.

Letter 11

page 31. your friendship. Jonson was a close friend of Donne, whom he esteemed "the first poet in the world in some things".

31. My lady, the Countess of Bedford. Her house at Twickenham was the resort of wits and poets, including not only Jonson and Donne, but Michael Drayton and Samuel Daniel—"the well-languaged Daniel". She was a woman of taste and learning. All her poets made her their theme, Jonson with most success. Cf. his *Epigram*, lxxvi:—

> This morning, timely rapt with holy fire,
> I thought to form unto my zealous Muse,
> What kind of creature I could most desire
> To honour, serve, and love; as poets use
> I meant to make her fair, and free, and wise,
> Of greatest blood, and yet more good than great;

I meant the day-star should not brighter rise,
Nor lend like influence from his lucent seat.
.
Such when I meant to feign, and wished to see,
My Muse bade "Bedford" write, and that was she.

31. oppressures, oppressions.

Letter 12

page 32. my plainsong. Plainsong is the name given to the primitive form of church music, a level simple melody with slight variations.

33. usquequo, Domine, the beginning of *Psalm* lxxxix, 46, in the Vulgate, where it runs: *Usquequo, Domine, avertis in finem?* Herrick reveals what Mr. Gosse calls his "pagan temperament" in his treatment of a noble psalm. Speaking of Herrick's religious verse, Mr. Gosse says happily: "Herrick sings lustily in church, but he sings to the old heathen tunes".

33. be you my firm assistant. The reader may observe a strong likeness between the somewhat unctuous tone of these comfortable clauses and the tone in which Herrick at times addresses his Maker. Cf. some lines in the dainty lyric *A Thanksgiving to God*:

Lord, 't is thy plenty-dropping hand
That soils (i.e. feeds) my land,
And giv'st me, for my bushel sown,
Twice ten for one;
Thou mak'st my teeming hen to lay
Her egg each day;
Besides, my healthful ewes to bear
Me twins each year;
The while the conduits of my kine
Run cream, for wine:
All these, and better, thou dost send
Me, to this end—
That I should render, for my part,
A thankful heart.

The letter as a whole is expressive of that luxurious, sunny spirit which fills the *Hesperides* with the scent and colour of the ripening earth.

Letter 13

page 33. that river. Cf. *Henry IV*, Part I, iii, 1, 98–140. The dispute is about the course of the "smug and silver Trent", which Hotspur (to increase the northern "moiety" assigned to him) would divert into the Wash, so as to gain the "huge half-moon" of Lincolnshire —"a monstrous cantle". That Suckling, quoting from memory, identifies the river with the Tweed is shown by the latter part of his letter and by the movements of the royal army. According to Clarendon (*History of the Rebellion*, Book II) the army mustered at York, whence Charles

marched in May, 1639. By May 29 his forces were encamped "in an open field called the Berkes, on the further side of Berwick". After some skirmishing an agreement was reached, and the army disbanded on June 24.

33. my friend; merely a phrase of affection. Suckling was only seven years old when Shakespeare died.

34. scantlet, a small portion. A similar form is scantling (Cf. Shakespeare, *Troilus and Cressida*, i, 3, 341). In the passage cited, Shakespeare uses *cantle* [the correct word, from Fr. *cantel*, a diminutive of a form *cant*, Du. *kant*, edge]. The *s* is due to the influence of scant.

34. the other side, i.e. Scotland.

34. dawning towards earnest. This and other phrases in the letter recall the quick fancy that gave us the incomparable *Ballad upon a Wedding* with its haunting lines:

Her feet beneath her petticoat
Like little mice stole in and out,
As if they feared the light.

Letter 14

page 35. Penshurst, near Tunbridge, Kent, the beautiful seat of the Sidney family. Ben Jonson has some fine lines on it (No. 2 in *The Forest*) beginning:

Thou art not, Penshurst, built to envious show
Of touch (i.e. *touch-stone*) or marble, nor canst boast a row
Of polished pillars or a roof of gold:
.
Thou joy'st in better marks, of soil, of air,
Of wood, of water; therein art thou fair.

35. Lady Dorothy, eldest daughter of Robert Sidney (see Letter 3), created Earl of Leicester, 1618, and niece of Sir Philip. She was now nearly twenty-two. Waller became a widower in 1634. When he began to pay court to Dorothy is not known, but as Sacharissa she is, in John Aubrey's phrase, "eternized in his poems". She appears to have treated his suit with indifference, and in 1644 Waller consoled himself with Mary Bracey.

Letter 15

page 37. Rear-admiral Kempthorne (1620–79) was, like Drake and Raleigh, a Devonshire man, and fought with distinction in the Dutch War, 1665–6. In April, 1667, he commanded a squadron at Lisbon. This is the expedition referred to in the letter. It is worth noting that in 1669 the *Marie Rose* was his own ship; and with her he fought a splendid fight with six Algerian ships of war—a deed of valour which won him knighthood.

37. the example, plainly the episode of Cæsar's soldiers on the raft slaying one another, when surrounded by Pompey's ships (*Pharsalia*, iv, 402–581).

38. Jesuits' powder was the earliest form of quinine. It was the bark of the cinchona ground to powder, and was brought from Peru to Europe by the Jesuits about 1650. In 1659 an issue of the *Mercurius Politicus* (a semi-official newspaper partly controlled by Milton) shows an advertisement of "The fever bark commonly called the Jesuits' powder".

38. notice of such plants. John Evelyn, one of Browne's correspondents, has left a glimpse of Browne's home at Norwich: "His whole house and garden being a paradise and cabinet of rarities, and that of the best collections, especially medals, books, plants, and natural things". "While England was being torn with civil war," says Mr. J. A. Symonds. "[Browne] pondered in his study upon Pharaoh, and the song the sirens sang, and the name Achilles bore among the daughters of the King of Scyros."

38. Impellant animæ, &c. Horace, *Carm.*, iv, 12, 2 (slightly altered): "May Thracian (i.e. north-east) breezes waft your sails".

Letter 16

page **39. Camden**, William (1551–1623), was the famous antiquary. His chief work is *Britannia*, an account of the British Isles (in Latin) based on his own many journeys. He became second master of Westminster School in 1575, and headmaster in 1593. To him Jonson dedicates *Every Man in his Humour* (1598).

39. a son of Sir Walter Raleigh, the eldest son, the "little Wat", who shared his father's imprisonment in the Tower. This incident is mentioned out of its order. It was in 1613 that this lad—no credit to his father, if report be true—travelled in France with Jonson as his governor.

39. in the trade, i.e. actor and playwright. He joined the Lord Admiral's company of players after his return from soldiering in the Low Countries.

40. Mr. Wood, the distinguished antiquary, Anthony à Wood (1632–95). His chief work is *Athenae Oxonienses*, a history of notable men educated "in the most eminent and famous University of Oxford". In the compilation of this work Wood had some assistance from John Aubrey.

Letter 17

page **41. Mr. Marvile**, i.e. Andrew Marvell, the Puritan poet, whose ode *Upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland* contains the noblest lines ever written on Charles I, beginning:—

> He nothing common did or mean
> Upon that memorable scene.

Though twelve years younger, Marvell was a congenial spirit to Milton, scholarly and refined. Milton's recommendation was not effectual at this time. Marvell was not appointed his assistant till 1657.

41. the Lord Fairfax. For two years Marvell was tutor to Mary, Fairfax's only daughter.

41. Weckerlyn, or Weckherlin, was Milton's earliest assistant.

41. Conference with Ambassadors. In March, 1649, Milton was made "Secretary for foreign tongues", his duties being to translate dispatches from and to other governments and to interpret at audiences with foreign envoys. He had also some oversight of the *Mercurius Politicus*, a semi-official newspaper. His salary was £288 a year, and all his time was at the disposal of the Government.

41. Mr. Ascan, or Ascham, was in 1650 sent as Ambassador of the Parliament to Madrid; but the day after his arrival he was assassinated by some English royalists.

Letter 18

page 42. came to London. Philoras, an Athenian of noble family born towards the close of the sixteenth century, studied at Rome. Enjoying the confidence of Richelieu, he made his residence at Paris, and about 1653 visited London. There are two extant letters to him from Milton.

43. about ten years since. Milton's blindness came on very gradually. By 1650 the sight of the left eye was gone. His physician warned him of the danger of losing the other. Milton sacrificed all to write his *Defence of the English People* (1651) against Salmasius. "The choice lay before me," he said, "between dereliction of a supreme duty and loss of eyesight. In such a case I could not listen to the physician . . . I could but obey that inward monitor, I know not what, that spake to me from heaven."

43. Phineus, a Thracian king, punished by Zeus for cruelty to his sons. Zeus gave him the choice of death or blindness. He chose to lose the light of the sun, which Phœbus regarded as a slight, sending harpies to steal the blind man's food. The Argonauts came and drove the harpies away. Phineus is mentioned in *Paradise Lost*, iii, 38: "Tiresias and Phineus, prophets old". (Cf. also *Aeneid*, iii, 212.)

43. the Argonautics, i.e. the *Argonautica*, the Greek epic in four books on the voyage of the *Argo* written by Apollonius Rhodius (*circ.* 200 B.C.).

Letter 19

page 45. Virgil found gold at the jaws of Avernus (*Aeneid* vi, 201–9).

46. just and specious, appropriate and handsome. In the introduction to his *Kalendarium Hortense, or the Gardener's Almanac*, Evelyn speaks of "things to be done in their just season". [Cf. Lat. *justus* = regular.]

46. an after-game, a second game played with the object of reversing the fate of the first. Cf. Milton in *A Free Commonwealth* (pub. 1660): "Losing by a strange after-game of folly all the battles we have won".

46. action at Bergen. In 1665 the British fleet, under the Earl of Sandwich, tried to capture the Dutch convoy from the Baltic. The

convoy took refuge in the harbour of Bergen, at that time with Norway under Danish rule, and escaped by the protection of the Danish guns.

47. my Treatise, *Navigation and Commerce, their Origin and Progress* (pub. 1674).

47. prolusion, preliminary essay.

47. coleworts, cabbages. Wyclif in a sermon (*circ.* 1380) speaks of "coleworts and other weeds". *Cabbage* came in, sometime in the fifteenth century, from the French (*caboche*). Caxton (*circ.* 1495) uses the two words together: "Caboches and coleworts".

47. exauctorated, dismissed, deposed (Lat. *exauctorare* = to cashier). Otherwise spelt exauterated, exauthorated.

47. Tantum memento, &c., *Gen.* xl, 14 (Vulg.).

Letter 20

page 48. **Confession . . . Restitution**. The two are brought together in Hooker's *Ecclesiastical Polity* (vi, 4), but there "restitution" means the reconciliation of the penitent to the Church.

48. Browne, Sir Richard (1605–83), was John Evelyn's father-in-law. He was Lord Mayor of London in 1661, and afterwards served Charles II as ambassador in Paris.

48. the last instances. Pepys did not anticipate the rise of a Rodney or a Nelson.

49. Lely, Sir Peter (1617–80), was a German painter who came to England in 1641. We owe to him portraits of Charles I and Cromwell.

Letter 21

page 50. **verses upon the Royal Society**, i.e. Cowley's *Ode to the Royal Society*, in which Evelyn, who became secretary of the Society in 1672, took a great interest. It contains a fine tribute to Lord Bacon.

> Bacon, like Moses, led us forth at last
> The barren wilderness he past,
> Did on the very border stand
> Of the blest promised land,
> And from the mountain's top of his exalted wit,
> Saw it himself and shewed us it.
> But life did never to one man allow
> Time to discover worlds, and conquer too;
> Nor can so short a line sufficient be
> To fathom the vast depths of nature's sea.

Cowley died in July of this year (1667). Evelyn records the fact in his *Diary*, styling him "that incomparable poet and virtuous man".

50. Mr. Sprat's desire. This is Dr. Sprat, who became Dean of Westminster and later Bishop of Rochester. Evelyn calls him "that great wit, Dr. Sprat". The "History" referred to is his *History of the Royal Society* (pub. 1667).

50. the author, Sir George Mackenzie (1636–91), the founder of the Advocates' Library in Edinburgh. Dryden mentions him, in the Discourse on Satire prefixed to his *Juvenal*, as a "noble wit of Scotland". Mackenzie wrote, in 1665, *A Moral Essay preferring Solitude to Public Employment*. Evelyn replied to this, in 1667, with *Public Employment and an Active Life preferred to Solitude*.

Letter 22

page 51. **begun by chance**. Locke gives the circumstances in his *Epistle to the Reader* prefixed to the *Essay*. "Five or six friends meeting at my chamber, and discoursing on a subject" (the principles of morality and revealed religion) "very remote from this, found themselves quickly at a stand, by the difficulties that rose on every side. After we had awhile puzzled ourselves, without coming any nearer a resolution of those doubts which perplexed us, it came into my thoughts that we took a wrong course, and that, before we set ourselves upon inquiries of that nature, it was necessary to examine our own abilities and see what objects our understandings were, or were not, fitted to deal with." This meeting probably took place in 1661 at the London residence of Lord Ashley, Locke's kind patron.

52. the language of the schools, i.e. following the lines of the Aristotelian logic.

53. published, in French. This happened while Locke was living in exile at Rotterdam. The *Abstract* was printed at Amsterdam, and was the translation of an outline made by Locke, the basis of which may have been the "rough draught" here mentioned.

Letter 23

page 54. **Perrault** (1628–1703), a poor poet but a literary celebrity. In 1688, on the publication of his *Parallèle des Anciens et des Modernes*, there broke out between him and Boileau the famous controversy on the merits of the Ancients and Moderns. The controversy raged for over twelve years, crossing to England. It is to Perrault that we owe much of the modern vogue of the fairy tale. He is practically the creator of *Red Riding Hood*, *Puss in Boots*, and *Cinderella*.

54. translation of Virgil, published some three years later (1697). Besides his *Virgil*, Dryden's chief translations are *Juvenal* and portions of *Ovid*.

54. his machines. This word, in drama, often means the supernatural agency or persons introduced. In his preface to *Juvenal*, Dryden says of Milton that "his heavenly machines are many and his human persons are but two".

55. Boileau. Cf. *L'Art Poétique*, iii, 205, 89.

55. King Arthur's conquest. King Arthur was the subject of an opera by Dryden, performed in 1691, Purcell supplying the music. [It is noteworthy that Dryden, like Milton, intended to treat Arthur's story epically.]

55. Mr. Rymer, known to-day as the author of the *Foedera*, an account of the English treaties from 1100 A.D. He fancied himself a dramatic critic and set out his views in an open letter entitled: *The Tragedies of the Last Age Considered* (1678). Later, in his *Short View of Tragedy* (1693), he uttered strictures on Shakespeare and Ben Jonson to which Dennis replied in *The Impartial Critic* (1693), and which evoked Dryden's famous epigram: "The corruption of a poet is the generation of a critic".

56. which we call Pindaric. A common view of the Pindaric ode seems to have been that held by Horace (*Carm.*, iv, 2), that its mark was irregularity (*numeris lege solutis*). Cowley was supposed to write in the mode of Pindar when, in such poems as the *Ode on the Resurrection* and the *Ode on the Royal Society*, he used irregular metres and uneven stanza divisions. This was the model of Dryden's *Song for St. Cecilia's Day*, and, as a modern critic says: "a whole current of loud-mouthed lyric invocation" has flowed from this source. Pindar's odes were written for music, but there is no musical aid in the licence claimed by Cowley. Pope, however, plainly thought Cowley's *Odes* his chief claim to notice, when he wrote of the poet:

Forgot his Epic, nay Pindaric, art.

[There is a highly amusing description of an encounter between Cowley and Pindar in Swift's *Battle of the Books*.]

56. Nat. Lee (1650–92) actor and writer of tragedies. He aided Dryden in the composition of two tragedies, *Œdipus* and *The Duke of Guise*. In 1684 he had to be confined in Bedlam, and thereafter till death he was subject to fits of insanity.

56. Otway, Thomas (1651–85), dramatist, whose chief works are *The Orphan* and *Venice Preserved*. Pope mentions him in the same breath with Shakespeare:

The tragic spirit was our own,
And full in Shakespeare, fair in Otway shone;
But Otway failed to polish or refine.

Poor Otway was choked to death, swallowing some bread at a gulp in a state of starvation.

56. poor poets militant. The phrase is in Cowley's lines on the death of his friend, Richard Crashaw:

Hail, bard triumphant! and some care bestow
On us, the poets militant below!

56. even the devil. Cf. *Paradise Lost*, iv, 888: "Lives there who loves his pain?"

57. my dear friend. William Wycherley (1640–1715), dramatist and poet, was known among his contemporaries as "Manly" Wycherley, from the name of the hero of *The Plain Dealer*, his most successful comedy. He had not the ease and sparkle of Congreve, but was admired for his masculine boldness. Dryden commends "the satire, wit, and strength of manly Wycherley".

58. Virgil says. Cf. *Aeneid*, vi, 448.

Letter 24

page 59. I was in Scotland. Defoe was sent to Scotland in 1706 as a secret agent of Harley's Government, to work in the interests of the Union of Parliaments, which took place next year.

59. either party. Defoe, as a journalist, was clever and original; but he was regularly in the pay of Government, and his connection with the two great parties scarcely does him credit. He passed from one to the other "like a mere dependant". On the fall of Harley and the Tories in 1708 Defoe served Godolphin as a sound Whig. When Harley returned to office in 1710 he again worked for the Tories. The best that can be said, is said of him by Sir Leslie Stephen: "His morality was, at worst, above that of many contemporary politicians". It was as a development of journalism that he wrote the *Journal of the Plague* (1722).

Letter 25

page 61. Quot homines, &c., as many minds as men (*Ter. Phormio*, ii, 4, 14).

61. farce-fools, fools in a farce (a species of play whose sole object is to provoke laughter).

62. Sooterkins; a word of obscure origin. Johnson defines it as a kind of false birth, fabled to be produced by Dutch women from sitting over their stoves. Thus it comes to mean an abortive attempt, and is so used by Pope in the *Dunciad* (i, 126–9), where he describes Bays floundering amid embryo and abortion:

> Nonsense precipitate, like running lead,
> That slipped through cracks and zig-zags of the head;
> All that on folly frenzy could beget,
> Fruits of dull heat, and sooterkins of wit.

62. Jonson's 'Fox', commonly called *Volpone*, from its chief character, was first acted in 1605. It is a revolting picture of vice. Volpone is a villainous Venetian grandee, who feigns sickness and promises privately to make Corbaccio (the Crow) and each of his other friends his sole heir in order to secure their gifts. The name has become in literature the synonym of base hypocrisy.

63. The character of Morose in *Epicene or the Silent Woman*, first acted in 1609. Dryden (*Defence of the Essay of Dramatic Poesy*) prefers it "before all other plays" on the ground that the plot is "included in twenty-four hours". Morose, the hero or the victim, is a misanthrope hating noise, who has his house in a street so narrow as to admit neither coach nor cart. "All discourses but my own", he says, "afflict me." To Mute, his servant, he constantly insists: "Answer me not but with your leg". He has made treaties with the fishwives and hawkers and "pensioned the waits".

63. a character of humour. Humour is used here and throughout

the letter in the sense not of a whim or mood but of a fixed and dominant idiosyncrasy.

64. **Sir John Daw**, a conceited literary fool, voluble in his criticism of great writers. "What do you think of the poets, Sir John?" he is asked. "Not worthy to be named for authors," he replies. "Homer, an old tedious prolix ass, talks of curriers and chines of beef; Virgil, of dunging of land, and bees; Horace, of I know not what."

64. **Thraso**, the boastful hero of Terence's comedy, the *Eunuch*.

64. **Pyrgopolinices**, i.e. Tower-town-taker, the "braggart soldier", who is the hero of Plautus' comedy *Miles Gloriosus*.

64. **Every Man in his Humour**, Jonson's best-known play, was first acted probably in 1598, Shakespeare taking part in the original performance. Cob, the water-carrier, one of the chief minor characters and one of the best clowns in drama, is an admirer of the boaster, Captain Bobadil, and gets soundly beaten for his pains. He swears "by the foot of Pharaoh" ("There's an oath! How many water-bearers shall you hear swear such an oath?").

64. **Bartholomew Fair**, first acted in 1614, is a broad farce, remarkable for the number and the medley of its characters, depicting the real life of London streets. It is said to have suggested Vanity Fair to Bunyan.

67. **a May-pole**, a pole set up on village greens for the festivities connected with "going a-Maying" and choosing a May queen on the first of May. A permanent Maypole overlooked the Strand in London about the end of the seventeenth century, and was decorated on holidays.

Letter 26

page 68. **this place**. Swift had left London (May, 1709) in disgust with Halifax and the Whig ministers, from whom he got only compliments, when he wanted a bishopric. On his way back to his parish at Laracor, in Ireland, he stopped at Leicester to pay what was to prove the last visit to the mother whom he loved devotedly.

68. **Lord President**, the Earl of Pembroke, the most respected member of Godolphin's ministry.

69. **where I am banished**. Swift had the living of Laracor, about twenty miles from Dublin. He also held a prebend in St. Patrick's Cathedral, of which he was afterwards Dean. His income as a clergyman was about £230 a year. Possibly by "the place" of his banishment Swift means Ireland rather than Laracor.

69. **another person of quality**, L. Marcius Philippus. The story is told in Horace's admirable verse-letter to Maecenas (*Ep.*, i, 7), in which he wittily and courteously protests against his independence being compromised by Maecenas' liberality.

69. **Hac ego si compellar**, &c., Horace, *Ep.*, i, 7, 34: "If I am hard pressed with this illustration, I give you back everything". The sarcasm of Swift's letter is both bitter and daring.

70. Dr. South, Robert South, D.D. (1633–1716), for seven years public orator of Oxford University, a great divine and famous preacher. He became prebendary of Westminster in 1663. His sermons are full of humour and of the kind, in Southey's phrase, to "warm the cockles of your heart".

71. Sir William Temple. Swift left Ireland on the outbreak of war in 1688, and found shelter at Leicester with his mother, at whose request he was received as a kind of secretary into the household of Sir William Temple, a distant relative living at Moor Park in Surrey. Temple had won distinction in politics and letters, and possessed a fine library; he was a personal friend of William III, whom Swift met at Moor Park. Here Swift remained till 1694, when, galled by his dependance, he took orders and obtained a small living in Antrim. Tiring of the lonely life, however, and being warmly invited back by Temple, he returned to Moor Park in May, 1696, and made his home here till Temple's death (Jan., 1699). During this second period he completed *The Tale of a Tub*, and, by way of a makeweight to Temple's part in the famous Boyle-Bentley controversy, wrote his brilliant satire *The Battle of the Books*. It was Temple's Whig politics that committed Swift at the outset of his career to the Whig party.

Letter 27

page **71. Mrs. Howard**, afterwards Countess of Suffolk, was the mistress of the Prince of Wales, who in 1727 became George II. Swift was introduced to her by friends (1726) in the hope of obtaining preferment. She was friendly, but powerless against the influence of Walpole.

71. Gulliver's Travels, published in November, 1726. Mainly by Pope's management, Swift received for it £200, the only money he ever got for his writings.

71. the second volume. *Gulliver* was published in two volumes, the second containing the third voyage (to Laputa, Balnibarbi, &c.) and the fourth voyage (to the country of the Houyhnhnms).

71. Dr. Arbuthnot. John Arbuthnot (1667–1735), the genial physician and wit, was the close friend of Swift, Pope, and Gay, and a member of the Scriblerus Club. His chief work is the *History of John Bull* (1712). He took a keen interest in *Gulliver*, and predicted for the book "as great a run as John Bunyan".

71. the projectors. These occupied rooms in the Grand Academy of Lagado, and busied themselves in various absurd experiments. In his desire to satirize the Royal Society, Swift here goes beyond his knowledge, and loses the ingenuity and plausibility of the earlier portions of the *Travels*.

71. the flying island, Laputa, was exactly circular, with a diameter of 7837 yards, and was raised or lowered by the operation of an enormous lodestone. The inhabitants were absent-minded philosophers.

72. such journeys. On this occasion (1726) Swift left Dublin in March, paid a short visit to Gay at Whitehall, and spent the rest of the time with Pope at Twickenham. He was back in Dublin by

September. His friendship with Pope shows Swift at his best. Their acquaintance began in the summer of 1713. Within twelve months they were parted, not to meet again till 1726. Their correspondence shows, particularly on Swift's side, an affection strong and sincere. If Pope loved any man besides himself, it was Swift.

72. at Twickenham. Pope established himself here in 1719, when he bought the lease of a house with five acres of ground.

72. friend Gay. John Gay (1685–1732), poet and dramatist, was a member of Swift's inner circle and a frequent cause of the dean's anxiety. Swift helped him in his poem *Trivia* (1716), and he had the assistance of Pope and Arbuthnot in his comedy, *Three Hours after Marriage* (1717). In their correspondence Swift continually rebukes Gay's indolence, and urges him to make provision for the future.

72. fifty tales. For some two years Gay had been at work on his verse tales or *Fables*, on which his reputation to-day mainly rests. They were begun to amuse one of the princes. The delay in their publication, that Swift complains of, was caused by the engravers of the illustrations. The book appeared in 1727.

Letter 28

page 72. as lame as your letter. Swift was suffering from the effects of a fall, which confined him to his house for some months. Gay's letter, to which he is replying, had promised an addition by the Duchess of Queensberry, which the lady was unable to supply. In 1729 Gay was taken by the duke and duchess under their protection, the duke looking after his money and the duchess after his comfort. Several joint letters to Swift were penned by Gay and the duchess, and Swift humorously implies that the lady's part was the more vigorous. She often pressed Swift to visit them at Amesbury.

72. Amesbury Downs. The country seat of the Duke of Queensberry was at Amesbury, in Wilts. Gay had written: "The Downs are so smooth, that neither horse nor man could make a wrong step".

73. experto crede, believe the man of experience; cf. *Aeneid*, xi, 283. Evidently Swift, during this time of lameness, occasionally gave a penny to a boy who helped him to hobble about, instead of spending a shilling on the hire of a sedan chair.

73. losing your great acquaintance. Gay had written of his dislike for society. "I have left off all my great acquaintance, which saves me something in chair-hire."

73. Cornbury's refusing his pension. Henry Hyde, Viscount Cornbury (1710–53), was in 1732 offered a "very handsome" pension by the influence of his brother-in-law the Earl of Essex. Regarding it as a political bribe, he refused it. In the same year his Jacobite leanings secured his return as M.P. for Oxford University.

73. the reverse of Mr. Pope. In his *Verses on his own Death*, Swift compares the feelings of Gay and Pope:

> Poor Pope will grieve a month, and Gay
> A week, and Arbuthnot a day.

73. a rooted laziness. Swift is severe on Gay, but probably not too severe. Mr. Austin Dobson has summed Gay up as "affectionate and amiable, but indolent, luxurious, and very easily depressed. His health was never good, and his inactive habits and tastes as a gourmand did not improve it."

73. A coach and six horses. Gay must have affected this aristocratic mode of travelling. In another letter Swift says of him: "Any lady with a coach and six horses would carry him to Japan".

74. money, your best friend. In 1720 an edition of his poems (published by Lintot) brought Gay £1000. His friends counselled prudent investment. In vain. This most "refractory, honest, good-natured man", as Swift styled him, speculated in South Sea stock and lost all.

74. attend to trifles, a point on which Swift seems to have laid peculiar stress among his friends.

74. your country skill. This passage seems to have a mocking reference to Gay's poem *Rural Sports* (published Jan., 1713), which contains an elaborate description of the fisher and the exploits of his "taper rod":

> He sits him down, and ties the treacherous hook;
> A twining earth-worm he draws on with care,
> With which he neatly hides the pointed snare.
>
> Into the stream the twisted hair he throws,
> Which gently down the murmuring current flows;
> When if or Chance or Hunger's powerful sway
> Directs a ranging trout this fatal way,
> He greedily sucks in the tortured bait,
> And shoots away with the fallacious meat.

74. General Meredyth made himself notorious at the downfall of Marlborough's party, and was dismissed from the army. In the *Journal to Stella*, under the date Dec. 13, 1710, Swift writes: "You hear the havoc making in the army. Meredyth [and other officers] are obliged to sell their commands at half value and leave the army, for drinking destruction to the present ministry, and dressing up a hat on a stick, and calling it Harley; then drinking a glass with one hand and discharging a pistol with the other at the manikin, wishing it were Harley himself."

74. Mrs. Pope, Pope's mother, to whom he was deeply attached. She was now in her eighty-ninth year and lived to be over ninety, dying in July, 1733 (cf. Letter 34).

74. your own health. In March, 1730, Gay had informed Swift that he continued to drink "nothing but water", and plainly had to consider his health. Just seven months after this letter of Swift's, Gay died of fever (Dec. 4, 1732).

75. my stint, limit, fixed allowance. Cf. Lazarillo in Fletcher's *Love's Cure*, ii, 1: "Put me to a certain stint, sir! allow me but a red herring a-day".

Letter 29

page 76. Triumvirs of Parnassus. Bolingbroke playfully assigns to Gay the position of authority which was his own in Swift's judgment. Swift regarded Pope and Bolingbroke as forming with himself the literary triumvirate of the day. (Cf. introduction to Letter 30.)

76. Dawley farm, an estate near Uxbridge, in Middlesex, purchased by Bolingbroke in 1725, when, after his return from political exile, he was first allowed to hold real estate. Here he entertained Pope, Swift, and Voltaire, and drafted for Pope the philosophical sketch of the *Essay on Man*.

76. la bagatelle, nonsense, trifles. A favourite motto of Swift's was *Vive la bagatelle!* (Trifles for ever!) Cf. Pope, *Satire V* (to Mr. Murray):

> [If] Swift cry wisely, "Vive la bagatelle!"
> The man that loves and laughs must sure do well.

Letter 30

page 77. a project, one of several plans formed by Bolingbroke for getting Swift settled in England. All proved vain; and Swift never saw England again.

77. the decline of life. Swift was now sixty-four. Stella's death, three years previously (Jan., 1728), had been a great shock to him; but it was not till seven years after this letter was written that he began to show distinct signs of mental decay.

77. the alternative you propose. Swift occasionally hinted at suicide in his despondent moods. A fiercely characteristic utterance is in a letter to Bolingbroke in 1729: "It is time for me to have done with the world; and so I would, if I could get into a better before I was called into the best, and not die here in a rage, like a poisoned rat in a hole".

78. Pope, our divine. This passage refers to Pope's *Essay on Man*, which was now in preparation and appeared in Feb., 1733. It was dedicated to Bolingbroke, and owed ideas and inspiration to him. It opens with his name:

> Awake, my St. John! leave all meaner things
> To low ambition and the pride of kings.

The theme, sufficiently near that of the divine, is to—

> Expatiate free o'er all this scene of Man,
>
> Eye Nature's walks, shoot folly as it flies,
> And catch the manners living as they rise;
> Laugh where we must, be candid where we can;
> But vindicate the ways of God to Man.

Pope did not hesitate to inform his friends "how much, or rather how wholly, he was obliged to Lord Bolingbroke for the thoughts and

reasonings in his moral work". Pope clearly confesses, at the close of Epistle IV, the influence of Bolingbroke in drawing him from the scurrilous folly of the *Dunciad* to a theme worthier of his genius.

> Come then, my friend! my genius! come along;
> Oh master of the poet, and the song!
>
> Teach me, like thee, in various nature wise,
> To fall with dignity, with temper rise;
> Formed by thy converse, happily to steer
> From grave to gay, from lively to severe.
>
> When statesmen, heroes, kings in dust repose,
> Whose sons shall blush their fathers were thy foes,
> Shall then this verse to future age pretend
> Thou wert my guide, philosopher, and friend?

78. the gales of life. Cf. *Essay on Man*, ii, 105 *seq.*

> On life's vast ocean diversely we sail,
> Reason the card (i.e. compass), but passion is the gale.

Even the storm may have wholesome effects.

> The rising tempest puts in act (i.e. activity) the soul,
> Parts it may ravage, but preserves the whole.

79. that stoical fop Seneca. This is severe on one who has been extolled alike by ancients and moderns. Lucius Annaeus Seneca (B.C. 3–A.D. 65), a distinguished Stoic, wrote over twenty books of letters, discussing practical questions, to Lucilius. They were really moral essays or Stoic sermons.

79. her birthday. This P.S. is an instructive instance of Pope's manipulation of his correspondence. It appears in its present place in the quarto edition of the letters (1741). The letter of Bolingbroke in the extant copy in the Oxford MSS. has an entirely different (and less interesting) P.S. When Pope decided to omit the original P.S. he took the present P.S. from another letter, as is clear from this reference to his mother's birthday. She was born not in March but in June.

79. softens the mind. Pope's tender affection for his old mother is of a fine quality, and must make every good son have some love for him.

79. writing (or rather planning) the *Essay on Man.*

80. Sic, sic juvat, &c. It is my joy thus to go down to the shades (*Aeneid*, iv, 660).

80. Cantantes licet, &c. Let us sing on our way as far as we go; the path will prove less tiring (Virgil, *Eclogues*, ix, 64).

Letter 31

page 81. particular reflections. *Gulliver's Travels* is full of satire on mankind and human institutions; but it does not attack individuals. The government of Lilliput is a ludicrous parody of the Court of George I. The vastness and maturity of Brobdingnag, where man reaches the height of sixty feet, makes European civilization seem puny and raw. The narrative of the third voyage, to Laputa, to Lagado, and other places, is an attack on various forms of government, on learned societies and professions, on universities and scientific men. The fourth and last voyage, to the land of the Houyhnhnms, with its savage picture of the bestial Yahoos, is a fierce satire on the habits and vices of the whole human race.

82. Lord Harcourt, a friend of Pope and Gay, at whose country seat of Stanton-Harcourt Pope was a frequent visitor.

82. too far carried, allowed to go to extremes.

82. Duchess Dowager, i.e. Sarah, the widow of the great Duke of Marlborough. She died in 1732.

82. not giving us the least hint. This is plainly an affectation of ignorance. The *Travels* had been early discussed in the Scriblerus Club. The pretence is kept up to baffle a spy, in the event of the letter being opened in the Post Office. There are many complaints of such tampering. One of Swift's correspondents (in 1718) sends a letter by private hand, not trusting it to "the common post", because the Postmaster-General of Ireland has been guilty of opening letters "not directed to him nor his wife".

82. Among Lady-critics. Gay was known as a lady's man. At the height of his fame, his lady friends were so numerous as to earn the title "the female faction"; and an anonymous poem appeared in 1729, called *The Female Faction or the Gay Subscribers.*

82. the Princess, the Princess of Wales, afterwards Queen Caroline.

82. flying island. Cf. Letter 27.

82. nemine contradicente, without a dissentient voice. The severe satire on the Court, the ministers, and the Parliament might in the previous reign have offended both Lords and Commons, and have led to a prosecution such as Defoe suffered.

83. cum hirundine prima, with the earliest swallow. The flight of the swallow has generally been regarded as a sign of the change of season. Cf. Ovid, *Fasti*, ii, 853: *Veris praenuntia venit hirundo.*

83. Styl. Greg. The Gregorian or New Style of reckoning time (adopted by Pope Gregory in 1582) was eleven days in advance of the Old Style, followed in England till 1752. Gay reckons that Swift will arrive on Feb. 28, New Style (= Feb. 17, English reckoning).

83. a black swallow, referring to Swift's clerical dress.

83. lodging at court, i.e. with Gay, who, before he enjoyed the hospitality of the Duke of Queensberry, had rooms in Whitehall.

83. Irish silk. One of Swift's chief services to Ireland was the encouragement of native industries. When he came to England in 1726 he brought with him some Irish silks, which he presented to the Princess of Wales and to Mrs. Howard.

83. the bells in Ireland. On his return to Ireland at the end of August, 1726, Swift made a triumphal entry into Dublin, being greeted with bonfires and the ringing of church bells. Apparently the ringers did not claim their usual fee.

83. the thing that is not, the Houyhnhnm's phrase for falsehood. Cf. *Gulliver's Travels*, iv, 4.

83. B—— has been guilty. This seems to refer to Swift's manservant.

83. like Houyhnhnm, the horse endowed with reason, in whose household Gulliver stayed on his fourth voyage. The word, suggested by the whinny of a horse, is a dissyllable, as is shown in Pope's lines:—

> Nay, would kind Jove my organs so dispose,
> To hymn harmonious Houyhnhnms through the nose,
> I 'd call thee Houyhnhnm, that high-sounding name.

Letter 32

page 85. I was informed. Mr. Montagu went, in June, 1716, as ambassador to Turkey, then at war with Austria. Reaching Vienna in September, they wintered there, and did not reach Constantinople till May, 1717. In October Mr. Montagu was recalled—by Addison, then Secretary of State—but he remained with Lady Mary at Constantinople till after the birth of their daughter Mary, subsequently Lady Bute. Leaving Constantinople in June, 1718, they sailed to Genoa, and, journeying overland, reached England in October.

86. younger than you was; this idiom, when the pronoun was singular, was common in the early eighteenth century.

86. an old romantic seat, Lord Harcourt's country house, where Pope translated much of the *Iliad*. Gay was staying close by at another seat of Lord Harcourt's.

87. On the same pile, alluding to the Hindu custom of suttee (*sati*).

88. like the finest metals. This passage is a fair example of that "stilted and fine-spun gallantry" which Pope assumed for the benefit of lady friends like Lady Mary.

88. he was separated. The acquaintance between Pope and Lady Mary began early in 1716, a few months after the publication of the first volume of his *Homer*.

88. I have detested the sound. In 1717 Lintot published a one-volume edition of Pope's poems. Pope sent a copy to Lady Mary at Constantinople, with a hint that the poem *Eloisa to Abelard* con-

tained lines of personal application. He put the following into Eloisa's lips:—

> How oft, when pressed to marriage, have I said,
> Curse on all laws but those which love has made!
>
> Let wealth, let honour, wait the wedded dame,
> August her deed, and sacred be her fame;
> Before true passion all those views remove,
> Fame, wealth, and honour! what are you to Love?

He drew Lady Mary's attention to the closing lines:

> And sure, if fate some future bard shall join
> In sad similitude of griefs to mine,
> Condemned whole years in absence to deplore
> And image charms he must behold no more;
> Such if there be, who loves so long, so well,
> Let him our sad, our tender story tell!

[Taine's criticism of this poem will repay study. *History of English Literature*, Book III, 7.]

88. Odaliche, usually written Odalisque, the French form of the Turkish *odaliq*, a slave woman in a harem, especially one in the seraglio of the Sultan.

Letter 33

page 89. Anabaptist, one who holds baptism in infancy invalid, and so demands it of adults. The name was first applied to a German Protestant sect.

89. Mr. Gay's opera. The *Beggar's Opera* ran for sixty-three successive nights.

90. as Cato said in Addison's tragedy, 1713. Cf. *Cato*, v, 1, 19.

90. Treatise of the Bathos, contributed by Pope to the *Memoirs of Martin Scriblerus* (1741), compiled by Dr. Arbuthnot.

90. linked as friends. The *Dunciad* was dedicated to Swift. Cf. i, 19:

> O thou! whatever title please thine ear,
> Dean, Drapier, Bickerstaff, or Gulliver!
> Whether thou choose Cervantes' serious air,
> Or laugh and shake in Rabelais' easy chair,
> Or praise the Court, or magnify mankind,
> Or thy grieved country's copper chains unbind.

90. My greatest, i.e. the tie to his mother.

91. if I may quote myself. The line is slightly altered from the *Essay on Criticism* (519)—

> And while self-love each jealous writer rules,
> Contending wits become the sport of fools:
> But still the worst with most regret commend,
> For each ill author is as bad a friend.

91. Cedite, Romani, &c. "Make way, Authors all, Roman and Greek alike! Something greater than the *Iliad* is coming to the birth" (Propertius, Book II, xxxiv, 65). [Propertius refers to the publication of the *Aeneid*.]

Letter 34

page 92. this place, possibly the country seat of Pope's friend Lord Bathurst, the woods of which he elsewhere mentions.

92. poor Mr. Gay. Gay had died in December of the previous year (1732).

92. another friend. The ground of this reference to Swift is not quite clear. He was still writing vigorously, and his mental decay did not become marked till 1738.

92. my mother's room. Pope's mother had died some two months previously (July, 1733).

93. to the last of my moments. Pope had begun to correspond with Martha Blount by 1712, when he sent her the *Rape of the Lock*. If ever Pope had a genuine love affair it was with her, and at one time he appears to have wished her to marry him; but the elder sister, Teresa, made trouble between the two.

93. resolution to act for yourself. Martha Blount, though daily spending some time with Pope, lived with her mother and sister. She often went with him on visits to his friends. Pope wished her to leave her mother and live nearer to him.

Letter 35

page 94. news from Lisbon? As editor of the *Gazette*, the Government newspaper, Steele would have early information of foreign events.

94. Tuesday come se'nnight, i.e. Tuesday week, the day fixed for Steele's wedding.

Letter 38

page 96. From the Press, where he might have been working late on either the *Gazette* or the *Tatler*. The first number of the *Tatler* (a single folio sheet) appeared April 12, 1709, the name being invented "in honour of the fair sex". It was sold at a penny, and appeared thrice weekly, the supposed author being Isaac Bickerstaff, a name which Steele borrowed from Swift. From a hotch-potch of news and gossip, it developed into an essay on social and general topics. In Aug., 1710, some satirical articles on Harley in the *Tatler* caused Swift the loss of the Gazetteership. There was a danger of his also losing a lucrative post worth £300 a year, and he abruptly stopped the issue of the *Tatler*, Jan., 1711. Two months later he began the *Spectator*, professing an "exact neutrality between the Whigs and Tories".

Letter 40

page 97. For an allusion. "This allusion", writes Swift in reply, "was only calling a clergyman of some distinction an infidel: a clergyman who was your friend, who always loved you, who had endeavoured at least to serve you."

97. the Examiner. This was a Tory organ at one time contributed to by Swift. Steele began the *Guardian*, March, 1713, professing to abstain from matters of State, declaring himself with regard to the Church a Tory, and with regard to the State a Whig. He was soon bitterly embroiled with the *Examiner*, the champion of the Government. In order to be free to enter the political arena with an indictment of the ministry, Swift resigned, in June, 1713, his lucrative post as Commissioner of Stamps.

97. to the Treasurer. In an earlier letter Swift had asserted that he had asked Harley to "shew mercy" to Steele, and gave Steele to understand that he had been kept in his employment by Swift's interposition.

97. an injured man, the Duke of Marlborough.

98. nobody, but one that talked after you. Swift's reply throws some light on this confused sentence. "One thing . . . you are sure of: that the Examiner had talked after me, when he said 'Mr. A. had bridled you in point of party'." Swift continues: "I am so ignorant of this, that I cannot tell what it means: whether that Mr. Addison kept you close to a party, or that he hindered you from writing about party".

Letter 41

page 99. pour me délasser, to refresh myself. During the years 1711 and 1712 Addison assisted Steele with the *Spectator*; in 1713 he contributed frequently to the *Guardian*, Swift's next venture, a daily, which ran to 175 numbers. In spite of Steele's resolve to keep it out of the entanglements of party, the *Guardian* grew more and more political—in the exciting neighbourhood of the (Tory) *Examiner*—and, just before this letter of Addison's, Swift had dropped it to make way for a political paper called the *Englishman*. With this venture Addison would have nothing to do.

99. poor Dick. The violent tone of the *Englishman* disturbed Addison, already distressed by Steele's recklessness in resigning a comfortable £300 a year in a Government office to give himself political elbow room. Addison's anxiety was justified. Next year (March, 1714) Steele was expelled the House of Commons for libels in the *Englishman*.

100. Sir Richard Blackmore (1650–1729), physician in ordinary to William III, and an appallingly voluminous writer in prose and verse. Pope speaks of "Blackmore's endless line"; and Moore, in an epigram, describes how the physician, rhyming in his carriage—

Twixt death and epics passed his time,
Scribbling and killing all day long.

His philosophical epic *Creation* won praise from Addison, Johnson, and even Cowper.

Letter 42

page 100. with the proposals. The allusion is to the circulars inviting subscriptions to Pope's translation of the *Iliad*. This letter appeared in Pope's collection issued after the death of Addison, and doubt has been cast on its entire genuineness. Pope was always eager to employ his friends, and would not be likely to refuse so eminent a canvasser any more than Addison would be likely to fail in his canvass. Yet in the *Dunciad* (1729) Pope challenges anyone to show a single subscription procured for him by Addison. [Some of Pope's published letters to Addison are either fabrications or written by Pope to other people. One is a compilation made by piecing together *three* of Pope's letters to Caryll.]

101. in country business. The letter is dated from Bilton, in Warwickshire, where Addison, if the letter is genuine, must have been taking an autumn holiday.

Letter 43

page 101. the obliging letter. Swift's letter is lost. It reopened correspondence after a long silence. Addison in his reply readily embraces the offer of renewed amity, and shows no prejudice against Swift for his quarrel with Steele. Presumably he held Swift to be in the right.

101. my office. Addison resigned his position as Secretary of State, March 14, 1718. The statement of a friend that "he had too beautiful an imagination to make a man of business" may be correct; but there is little truth in Johnson's assertion, that he retired "finding by experience his own inability". The main cause was his weak health. He was granted a pension of £1500.

102. Bishop of Derry. Dr. Ashe, F.T.C.D., became Bishop of Clogher, and was translated to the see of Derry in 1717. As an undergraduate Swift was one of his pupils. It is he who is said to have performed the marriage ceremony for Swift and Stella in a garden (1716).

102. in laconic, terse phrase, in the style of the traditional speech of the Spartans. We have here a hint of a peculiar intimacy enjoyed by Swift and Addison in earlier days.

102. Holland House. When Addison married the Countess of Warwick (1716), "he hung up his hat behind the door", as the old phrase has it. His wife brought him only this fine house in Kensington, and he made his home there.

Letter 44

page 104. such a bamboozler. The verb (= to mystify) appears first about 1700. Swift, in an interesting *Tatler* paper (No. 230) on slang terms of the day, mentions it—with words like *banter*, *sham*, *bully*—as a word "now struggling for the vogue". Arbuthnot, in his *History of John Bull* (1712) speaks of the tricks of "banterers and bamboozlers".

104. my Sir Charles. *The History of Sir Charles Grandison*, Richardson's third novel, was published in 1753. This letter shows that it was sufficiently far advanced in 1751 to be submitted, in part, to the criticism of his intimate friends.

105. Harriet's passion. The heroine of *Sir Charles Grandison* is Harriet Byron, who falls in love with the hero in consequence of the rescue he effects when she is being forcibly abducted by Sir Hargrave Pollexfen in a chariot and six.

105. Sir Charles's character. Richardson had been urged by his friends, as he tells us in his preface, to depict "the character and actions of a man of true honour". In Sir Charles he presents us with his ideal of the perfect hero, the union of a Christian and an English gentleman. "Such unspotted worth," says Sir Walter Scott, "such unvarying perfection, is not to be met with; and hence the fatal objection of Sir Charles being—

The faultless monster that the world ne'er saw".

As M. Taine says: "A wax figure could not be more proper. . . . He has never done a mean action, nor made a wrong gesture. His conscience and his wig are unsullied. Let us canonize him, and stuff him with straw."

105. a Lovelace. Lovelace is the chief character in *Clarissa Harlowe* (1748). He is an unscrupulous voluptuary, who prides himself on his talent for subverting innocence.

107. the good Clarissa. Clarissa Harlowe is generally regarded as Richardson's most successful portrait. To avoid a forced marriage, she escapes from home and casts herself on the protection of Lovelace, who abuses her confidence. Though he succeeds in gratifying his passion, he cannot corrupt her virtue. She refuses the proffered reparation of marriage and retires into solitude to die. In Clarissa, Richardson, as Scott says, shows "there is a chastity of the soul, which can beam out spotless and unsullied, even after that of the person has been violated".

Letter 45

page 110. glad to resign them. Within six months one-half of Lady Mary's prophecy came true: Addison resigned the Secretaryship in March, 1718.

110. the voluminous dictionary. There appear to be no indications of Addison having seriously taken in hand such an enterprise.

110. two lucrative employments. Congreve received from Lord Halifax, in 1714, the appointment of Secretary for Jamaica, with a salary of £700, and later a patent place in the Customs, worth £600 a year.

110. the Iliad. The first volume of Pope's translation appeared in 1715 (Books I–IV). Subsequent volumes were delivered to subscribers in 1716, 1717, 1718, and the last in 1720.

111. Pactolus, a river of Lydia (the California of the ancient world) from whose famous sands gold was obtained by washing.

111. to Twickenham. This letter appears (like many letters to Pope) to have undergone a process of improvement. Pope did not make his residence at Twickenham till a year after the date of the letter. The compliments paid to him, at Addison's expense, are more fulsome than Lady Mary is likely to have paid. It is probable that these "purple patches" are a later addition.

111. their experiments. This is another echo of Pope, who, after his quarrel with Addison, lost no opportunity of insinuating that Addison was responsible for Tickell's translation (*Iliad*, Book I). In October, 1714, Pope asked Addison to read over a translation he had prepared of the first two books. Addison replied that Tickell had ready a translation of Book I; at Pope's request, however, he agreed to read Pope's second book. In June, 1715, when Pope's first volume appeared, Tickell's version, with a dedication to Lord Halifax, was published the same week. Pope was very angry with what he chose to regard as a conspiracy of "Cato and his little senate" at Button's Coffee-house.

111. the Odyssey soon. With the aid of two assistants Pope completed the translation of the *Odyssey* in 1725. His *Iliad* and *Odyssey* together brought him, after paying his assistants, the sum of £8000.

Letter 46

page 112. John Hughes. The man's name, as Pope states (Letter 32), was Hewet, and the MS. of Lady Mary's letter shows that she first wrote Hewet, but altered it, as a monosyllable was needed for her lines. When Pope issued his correspondence, he attributed his own letter, with the epitaph on the lovers, to Gay. This probably led Goldsmith to mention Gay as the author of the lines (*Vicar of Wakefield*, chapter viii).

112. carried, in the sense of developed. Lady Mary is said to have circulated among her friends a copy of this piquant letter—to Pope's subsequent annoyance.

Letter 47

page 114. the lampoon, possibly a libellous attack called *One Epistle to Mr. A. Pope*, published in 1730. The war on both sides had been most acrimonious, Pope introducing "Lady Marys" into the *Dunciad* (1728).

114. see him exalted. Lady Mary maintains that any libel on Pope in her handwriting must be a forgery of Pope's; and charitably hopes

that he may be led to exercise this dangerous cleverness in such a way as to bring him within the clutches of the law. The penalty for forgery was hanging.

Letter 48

page 115. **Countess of Bute**, wife of the famous Earl of Bute, who became prime minister in 1762.

115. **Miss How** (Howe) is the confidante of Clarissa Harlowe, and is drawn by Richardson in strong contrast to his gentle heroine. She is high-spirited, impulsive, and devoted to her friend.

116. **Bridewell or Bedlam**, reformatory or lunatic asylum.

116. **Lord Rochester** (1647–80), a nobleman and wit with some literary ability, but marked by the gross dissoluteness of Charles II's Court. He was the patron of Otway and, for a time, of Dryden. His best-known work is a caustic satire, *The Session of the Poets*.

116. **R. Random**. *Roderick Random*, Smollett's chief novel, was published in 1748. The hero is a young Scot out on his travels seeking his fortune. His vulgarity is redeemed by a dash of good nature and humour, but he is at heart a reckless libertine, selfish and vengeful. We see him with his simple, kind-hearted retainer, Strap, who has rescued him from starving, only to be exploited by Random, who wears his clothes, squanders his money for him, and then beats him in fits of anger.

116. **H. Fielding**. Henry Fielding (1707–54) had by this time taken a leading place in literature; all his novels had now been issued, viz. *Joseph Andrews* (1742), *Jonathan Wild* (1743), *Tom Jones* (1749), and *Amelia* (1751). [Fielding was Lady Mary's second cousin.]

Letter 49

page 117. **so good to send**. The omission of the correlative is frequent in eighteenth-century literature. Cf. Letter 47: "So kind to mention".

117. **Lord Bolingbroke** died in 1751. He left his papers in the hands of his literary executor, Mallet, who issued two volumes of collected works (including *Letters on the Study of History*) in 1752, and one volume (*Reflections on the State of the Nation*, &c.) in 1753.

117. **peace of Utrecht**, 1713, which ended the Great European struggle called the War of the Spanish Succession. Bolingbroke defends his share in the negotiations in *A Letter to Sir William Windham*.

117. **treaty of Gertruydenberg**. As the result of Marlborough's victory at Malplaquet (1709) Louis XIV made overtures of peace; and in March, 1710, negotiations were opened at Gertruydenberg, near Utrecht. The terms offered by Louis were more humiliating to France than those afterwards accepted by Britain at the peace of Utrecht.

118. **Madame de Sévigné** (1626–96) is the greatest of French letter-

writers. Some 1100 letters have been preserved, written mainly to her daughter (Madame de Grignan), whom she passionately adored, and to her son. These lively letters, with their sensible views of life and sound literary criticisms, have much of the charm that we find in the letters of Cowper; a charm the secret of which lies largely in the fact that they were composed without a dream of publication or a glance at posterity. They are marked throughout by a fine literary abandonment and naturalness of description, which makes life at the French Court or the rural scenes depicted live before our eyes. By some excellent judges they have been esteemed the finest collection of letters in the world. Lady Mary's heavy-footed criticism of her exquisite rival may be regarded as a tribute to graces she never attained.

119. it rids ground, it covers ground, makes progress. Cf. Gurnall's *Christian in Armour* (1655): "Thus the Christian rids but little ground, because he must go his weak body's pace".

119. Lord Bolingbroke's letters, i.e. *Letters on the Study of History.*

119. Tillotson, John (1630–94), ended his career as Archbishop of Canterbury, and was held in high estimation as a preacher. His sermons were long regarded as models of composition, and received the warm commendation of authorities so high as Dryden and Addison. Dryden went so far as to state that "if he had any talent for English prose, it was owing to his having read the writings of Archbishop Tillotson".

119. sometimes more diffuse. In laying this reproach of "padding" at Addison's door Lady Mary may have had in mind such a paper as *Spectator* No. 177 (*On Good Nature*), a fourth of which is made up of quotations from the *Book of Job.* Professor Minto, whose judgment of Addison is somewhat severe, gives instances of his tautology (*English Prose Literature*, chapter vi). In the same chapter Professor Minto says for Bolingbroke's style probably the best that can be said: "At every turn he electrifies the reader with some felicitous stroke of brevity, or happy adjustment of words to his meaning".

120. Bessus and his sword-men in Beaumont and Fletcher's *King and No King.* Bessus is a braggart captain strongly resembling Bobadil (in Jonson's *Every Man in his Humour*). Mardonius, his comrade, sums him up: "I'll do thee right, thou art furious in running away". In the scene referred to (iv, 3), Bessus appears with two "Sword-men", whom he has called in to consult on a point of honour. He has been kicked by a lord, and delicately unfolds the circumstances in such a way as to secure his reputation for valour without fighting. The sword-men reassure him. They declare that the valiant man shows his valour "by suffering and contemning" (says one); "in a head rebuked With pots of all size, daggers, stools, and bedstaves" (says the other).

120. Atticus. This title was bestowed on Addison by Pope, who, according to Lady Mary, "thought himself covertly very severe on" Addison by giving it. She expresses anger at seeing Addison thus "lampooned after his death". The word is too strong to describe such exquisite satire. Pope, however, asserted that the lines were written as early as 1716. (Addison died in 1719.) There is no independent

witness of their existence before 1722: they were printed as a fragment in the *Miscellanies* of 1727, and finally worked (1735) into the *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* (which serves as prologue to the *Satires*). The famous passage opens with the description of—

> One whose fires
> True genius kindles, and fair fame inspires;
> Blest with each talent and each art to please,
> And born to write, converse, and live with ease;
>
> Alike reserved to praise or to commend,
> A timorous foe and a suspicious friend;

and concludes,

> Who would not laugh if such a man there be?
> Who would not weep if Atticus were he?

[In the *Miscellanies* the last line ran: Who would not weep if Addison were he?]

Letter 50

page 122. **the person you recommend**, a certain Mr. Launcelot, named later in the letter. He had married a relation of Swift's.

122. **this office**. Chesterfield was Lord Steward of the King's Household. Swift had written to him the foregoing month (Nov., 1730) requesting a place for Mr. Launcelot, on the ground that a promise had been given by the previous Steward (the Duke of Dorset). With a display of much friendliness, Chesterfield practically declines to do anything.

122. **the author of my vindication**, i.e. by displaying his own capacity and so the wisdom of my selection: a good instance of Chesterfield's polished compliments.

Letter 51

page 123. **due from Holland**. At the age of fourteen Philip Stanhope (who was Chesterfield's natural son) had been taken from school at Westminster and sent to travel in Europe with a tutor (Mr. Harte). His father had advised him to study "the affairs, the interests, and the history, the constitutions, the customs, and the manners of the several parts of Europe". He was now spending some months in Saxony, from which the mail from London would probably pass through Cologne and Rotterdam.

123. **scribendi cacoethes**, itch for writing (*cacoethes* = malignant disease, often of an ulcerous nature). The phrase is Juvenal's: *tenet insanabile multos Scribendi cacoethes* (*Satires*, vii, 51–2).

Letter 52

page 126. **Corneille** (1606–84) the dramatist who, beginning with comedy, became the creator of French tragedy. His works are marked by grandeur in thought and passion. His first triumph was attained in *Le Cid*, the highest pitch of his genius in *Polyeucte*.

127. Mr. Murray. William Murray, better known as Lord Mansfield (1705–93), was a talented Scotch advocate who came to London in time to enjoy the friendship of Pope, and—as Johnson said of him, quoting Prior—to "drink champagne with the wits". He became Solicitor-General in 1742, Attorney-General in 1754, and Chief Justice in 1756. [As Attorney-General he was consulted, on the publication of Johnson's *Dictionary* (1755), by the Commissioners of Excise regarding the "libel" in Johnson's definition of Excise—"a hateful tax levied . . . by wretches hired by those to whom Excise is paid". Murray held that the definition was a libel, but suggested that Johnson should be allowed time to alter it—a permission which Johnson serenely ignored. No prosecution followed.]

127. informations, used occasionally in the plural with the meaning instructions (early) or narratives. Here it seems to mean items of information.

127. Paymaster. William Pitt (1708–78), created Earl of Chatham, on entering Parliament (1735), distinguished himself and offended George II by opposing the Hanoverian policy of the ministry. In spite of this he was, in 1746, made Paymaster of the Forces, Pelham's party bringing pressure to bear on the king by a threat of resignation. As Paymaster, Pitt created a precedent by refusing all perquisites and accepting only his salary.

128. agrémens, accomplishments, niceties.

128. the language which it will, i.e. whether English, French, or German, in all of which Stanhope was perfecting himself.

128. Bourgeois Gentilhomme, one of the most brilliant comedies of the great French dramatist Molière (1621–73). The hero is M. Jourdain, the would-be "man of quality"; a respectable citizen of Paris, who enjoys a fortune left to him by his father, a draper. To acquire the necessary accomplishments Jourdain engages professors of deportment, fencing, and philosophy. From the professor of philosophy—who informs him, to his surprise, that he has been talking prose without knowing it for forty years—he enquires the most gallant way of turning a compliment to a certain marchioness: *Belle marquise, vos beaux yeux me font mourir d'amour* (Fair lady, your bright glances are killing me with love). The professor suggests: *D'amour mourir me font, belle marquise, vos beaux yeux* and other forms; but not the form given by Chesterfield, who apparently quotes from memory, [Mr. Churton Collins in his Essay on Chesterfield's *Letters* points out several cases of misquotation.]

128. Bien narrer, to tell a story well.

129. a laced coat, i.e. adorned with lace. The fashion of gentleman using lace freely on their clothes appears to have come in under Charles II. Pepys mentions seeing the king "now out of mourning, in a suit laced with gold and silver". [At the performance of *Irene*, Dr. Johnson, sustaining the character of dramatic author, blossomed out in a scarlet waistcoat and a hat trimmed with gold lace!]

129. Marcel (died 1759) was a very distinguished Parisian professor of dancing. Many were the eminent pupils he instructed in deport-

ment. After watching a foreigner exhibit his skill in dancing, Marcel remarked: "In other lands people jump; only in Paris do they dance". Apparently Philip Stanhope, who had reached Paris by the end of 1751, was one of Marcel's pupils.

Letter 53

page 131. He shall not cry, *Is.* xlii, 2. [But Wesley forgets that the corresponding verb in the rendering of the Septuagint is used of Our Saviour in *St. John*, vii, 37. Would he have translated there: "He stood and screamed"?]

131. Thomas Walsh and John Manners are both mentioned in Wesley's *Journal*. Walsh was a frequent companion in Wesley's tours, and preached in Irish, not only in his own country but in London. Under date June 17, 1758, Wesley notes of Walsh that "by violent straining of his voice, added to frequent colds, he has contracted a pulmonary consumption, which is now in the last stage".

Letter 54

page 133. Brighthelmstone, the earlier name of Brighton, Sussex. It became the fashionable resort it now is owing to the attention paid to it by George IV, but its medicinal waters began to attract visitors early in the eighteenth century. Though Johnson speaks of it as "very dull", he paid several visits to the place.

Letter 55

page 134. the elegant Pindar. In a previous letter (Aug. 31, 1772) Johnson had written: "You promised to get me a little Pindar, you may add to it a little Anacreon". Apparently Boswell, failing to get the Anacreon, sends a Pindar bound with special elegance.

134. Dr. Beattie. James Beattie (1735–1802), the Scottish poet, was professor of moral philosophy at Aberdeen. He published the first book of his chief poem, *The Minstrel*, in 1771, and made the acquaintance of Johnson in the same year. Johnson thought highly of him. In the letter quoted above (Aug. 31, 1772) he wrote: "Beattie's book" (*On the Nature and Immutability of Truth*, 1770) "is, I believe, every day more liked; at least, I like it more, as I look more upon it".

134. your masquerade. This ball was given by an Edinburgh lady, and was described in the *Gentleman's Magazine* as the first masquerade ever seen in Scotland. Boswell went as a "Dumb Conjurer"!

134. your synod. Johnson probably means the Presbytery of Edinburgh, which might be expected to discuss any matter affecting public morals.

135. Baretti, Giuseppe (1719–89), a miscellaneous writer, who came to London to push his fortunes. He is best known as the

author of an excellent *Italian-English Dictionary* (1760). He won the friendship of Johnson, and was by him introduced to the Thrales. He published in 1766 *An Account of the Manners and Customs of Italy*, which Johnson pronounced "a very entertaining book". "He has not, indeed, many hooks," said Johnson of him, "but with what hooks he has he grapples very forcibly."

135. Davies, Thomas (1712?–85), began life as an actor. Johnson says he was driven from the stage by a mocking line in Churchill's *Rosciad* (1751):

He mouths a sentence as curs mouth a bone.

He had some success as a bookseller. In his shop he effected Boswell's long-desired introduction to Johnson (1763). Davies moved on the edge of Johnson's circle, who tolerated him in good-tempered fashion. [In 1773 Davies had the audacity to publish *Miscellaneous Pieces* "by the author of the *Rambler*" without any consent from Johnson.]

135. a new comedy, *She Stoops to Conquer*, first acted in March, 1773, and dedicated to Johnson. One sentence in the dedication marks Goldsmith's genuine respect: "It may do me some honour to inform the public, that I have lived many years in intimacy with you". Cf. Letter 84.

135. No name. The rehearsal was almost complete before a title was found. Johnson and his friends were "all in labour for a name to Goldy's play". *The Old House a New Inn* was suggested. Reynolds triumphantly proposed *The Belle's Stratagem*. Ultimately Goldsmith himself hit upon its final title, caught, as his biographer Forster states, from Dryden's line:

But kneels to conquer, and but stoops to rise.

135. Lord Auchinleck, Boswell's father, with whom his relations were often strained. Lord Auchinleck had no liking for Johnson, and objected strongly to Boswell's frequent visits to London. Johnson always refers to him with studious respect.

135. Mrs. Thrale. Cf. introduction to Letter 62.

Letter 56

page 136. since your Homer. After Macpherson's success with his translation of the alleged epics of Ossian, some of his Scottish friends wished him to give a version of Homer in the manner of Fingal. This appeared in prose (1773); but Macpherson begged the public not to read it as mere prose, and he marked what he called "the cadence" in a special way. In England it was received with coldness, which grew into ridicule, as "Homer in a kilt".

Letter 57

page 137. knowing as you do. "My friend", Boswell quaintly notes, "has, in this letter, relied upon my testimony, with a confidence of which the ground has escaped my recollection". Boswell elsewhere

remarks that Johnson was "to some degree of excess a true-born Englishman" in his prejudices.

137. any original. The bookseller who published Macpherson's poems advertised that the "originals" of Fingal were in his shop.

137. Dr. Blair. Hugh Blair (1718–99), an eminent Scottish professor, was Macpherson's chief literary champion, and wrote in his vindication a *Dissertation on the Poems of Ossian* (1763).

137. De non existentibus, &c., i.e.: The invisible is on the same footing as the non-existent; or, as Fielding humorously turns it, "when a woman is not seen to blush, she does not blush at all" (*Tom Jones*, i, 8).

138. Veronica, Boswell's eldest child. She was born in 1773. Johnson's courtesy leads him to send his compliments to a little girl not yet two years old.

Letter 58

page **138. the Chesterfield letter**; see Letter 60. Boswell had repeatedly asked for a copy of this renowned letter, and Johnson had promised to supply it. It was a matter in which Johnson showed considerable delicacy, refusing to satisfy the curiosity of friends and distinguished enquirers. The original sent to Lord Chesterfield is lost, but Johnson fortunately preserved a copy which he had dictated to Baretti. This was given to Bennet Langton. In 1781 Johnson repeated it from memory to Boswell, who afterwards verified this version from Langton's copy. To secure copyright, Boswell published the letter, together with his account of Johnson's interview with the king, as a pamphlet (4 pp. quarto, price half a guinea) in 1790, the year preceding the issue of the *Life*.

138. the difficulties. Boswell was often in money troubles. In 1775 his father, who allowed him £300 a year, had to assist him in his debts, and paid down £1000. By 1780 Boswell, largely through his generosity to his wife's relations, had incurred obligations to the extent of £800, and shrank from telling his father.

138. Beauclerk, Topham, one of Johnson's younger friends, was the great-grandson of Charles II and Nell Gwynne. He died in March, 1780. Johnson's relations with him and Langton were peculiarly pleasing, and he had the liveliest affection for both. When Beauclerk was ill, he said—with a voice faltering with emotion, as Boswell tells us—"Sir, I would walk to the extent of the diameter of the earth to save Beauclerk". It was Beauclerk who wrote on the frame of Johnson's portrait:

Ingenium ingens
Inculto latet hoc sub corpore.

[Mighty the intellect that hides in this uncouth body.] When, on Beauclerk's death, Langton acquired the portrait, the inscription was defaced; whereupon Johnson said to Langton, "It was kind in you to take it off", adding, after a short pause, "and not unkind in him to put it on".

138. nec, ut soles, &c., is the last line of Hadrian's beautiful

address to his soul, beginning *Animula vagula, blandula*: "Little gentle wandering soul . . . All thy wonted jests are done."

138. Lady Di, i.e. Lady Diana, Beauclerk's wife.

138. Mr. Langton, see Letter 66.

138. His library was, a year later, sold by public auction, realizing over £5000.

138. Dr. Percy (1729–1811), bishop of Dromore, collected from a folio MS. in an early seventeenth-century hand old poems of various dates, which he published with the title, *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765). The book produced at once a revival of interest in Old English poetry, and had a deep and widespread influence on our literature. The reference is to a fire which broke out in Northumberland House, where Percy had a room.

139. manifestum, &c., we have a thief caught in the act.

139. Mrs. Stewart was the sister of an amanuensis employed by Johnson when writing the *Dictionary*; and Boswell had been asked to find her in Edinburgh and pay her a guinea "for an old pocket-book of her brother's" which Johnson had kept. The good lady, wondering at the "scrupulous and liberal honesty" which prompted the gift, received it "as if sent her by Providence".

Letter 59

page 140. liberty and necessity. In his melancholy moods Boswell was fond of dabbling in philosophy. The issues involved in the problem of human freedom seem to have had a peculiar fascination for him.

140. my Lives. The *Lives of the Poets* appeared in 1779 and 1781. They were originally prepared as prefaces to editions of the poets. "My purpose", says Johnson, "was only to have allotted to every poet an advertisement . . . containing a few dates and a general character; but I have been led beyond my intention, I hope by the honest desire of giving useful pleasure". They were soon collected and issued as a distinct book. They exhibit Johnson at his best; they are packed with the mellow wisdom of the literary sage in his seventieth year; in their ease, richness, and strength they show what Johnson's style could attain to. Whether we accept all his judgments or refuse some, like Cowper, we must put the *Lives* in the front rank of critical works.

140. the Mitre, the London tavern, with the "orthodox high-church" name, which Johnson frequented. Here, soon after their introduction, Johnson supped with Boswell, and, after listening to Boswell's sketch of himself, exclaimed in his hearty way: "Give me your hand; I have taken a liking to you".

Letter 60

page 141. the World, a weekly satirical periodical which ran from 1753 to 1765. Among its contributors were Lord Chesterfield, Lord Lyttelton, and Horace Walpole.

141. slight encouragement. Johnson is possibly thinking of the sum of £10 sent to him by Lord Chesterfield.

141. Le vainqueur, &c. Cf. Boileau, *L'Art Poétique*, iii, 272.

141. in publick, i.e. when Johnson paid the compliment of submitting to Lord Chesterfield the "Plan" or prospectus of his *Dictionary*.

142. a Patron. Boswell draws attention to a significant alteration made by Johnson in the *Vanity of Human Wishes* (1749). This imitation of Juvenal's Tenth Satire contains some of Johnson's finest work, and was written with great ardour, as many as seventy lines being composed in one day. In it occur lines of warning to the man of letters:

> Deign on the passing world to turn thine eyes
> And pause awhile from letters, to be wise;
> There mark what ills the scholar's life assail,
> Toil, envy, want, the garret and the jail.

The disappointment inflicted by Chesterfield led Johnson to rewrite the last line, for "the garret" substituting "the Patron". Later in life Johnson used playfully to claim the patronage of Dodsley the bookseller. "Doddy, you know, is my patron."

142. The shepherd in Virgil exclaims: *Nunc scio, quid sit Amor* (*Eclogues*, viii, 43).

142. I am solitary, referring to the loss of his wife, whom he never ceased to mourn. Three years earlier, when his wife was dying, Johnson had written (*Rambler*, No. 203) that whatever comes to us at life's close reaches us too late, for it comes "when we cannot communicate and therefore cannot enjoy it".

Letter 61

page 143. Clarissa, published 1748, Richardson's second and greatest novel, on which, says Scott, "Richardson's fame as a classic of England will rest for ever".

Letter 62

page 145. Queeney, a pet name given to Mrs. Thrale's eldest daughter. It was suggested by her name, Esther.

145. Poor Lucy, Lucy Porter, Johnson's stepdaughter, to whom he showed constant kindness. For her he brought the box from Paris, "a little box, which I thought pretty; but I know not whether it is properly a snuff-box, or a box for some other use". Boswell's *Life*, (Nov. 16, 1775).

145. Mrs. Cobb, a widow living just outside of Lichfield; a great admirer of Johnson.

145. Peter Garrick, brother of David Garrick (1716–79). The two brothers started a wine business in London, which David, much to his brother's regret, soon abandoned for the stage.

145. Garrick's legatees. Garrick died Jan., 1779, and was buried in Westminster Abbey. His estate was estimated at £100,000, the bulk being left to his wife. Other relations received sums varying from £1000 to £10,000.

145. Mrs. Aston, sister-in-law to Johnson's early friend, Gilbert Walmsley, of Lichfield. When Johnson went up to London in 1737 he carried a letter of introduction from Walmsley stating that he was a "very good scholar and poet", with the prospect of turning out "a fine tragedy writer". (Johnson had with him the greater part of *Irene*, which was produced by Garrick in 1749. It ran for nine nights, and brought Johnson £295.)

Letter 64

page 147. a life radically wretched. Johnson writes as though he felt his end was near. Some seven months earlier (Dec. 18, 1783) Wesley entered in his *Journal*: "I spent two hours with that great man Dr. Johnson, who is sinking into the grave by a gentle decay". Johnson died Dec., 1784.

148. Queen Mary, on escaping from Lochleven Castle (May, 1568) fought the battle of Langside, near Glasgow, and was defeated by the Regent Moray. She fled southward, and reached Dundrennan Abbey in Kirkcudbright, whence after a brief stay she took boat and crossed the Solway Firth to the coast of Cumberland. Johnson is of opinion that she *rode* into England, fording the Rivers Sark and Esk.

148. the irremeable stream. This should denote the Sark; but Johnson seems rather to have had in mind the Styx, Virgil's *irremeabilis unda* (*Aeneid*, vi, 425).

148. the parallel. Mary Queen of Scots exchanged her captivity in Scotland for captivity in England, and perished tragically on the scaffold at Fotheringay, 1587.

Letter 67

page 151. Melancthon (1497-1560) "the mild Melancthon", as Boswell elsewhere calls him, was Luther's great colleague in the Germanic Reformation. He was a fine scholar and a man of a magnanimous, peace-loving disposition.

152. to do honour to your memory. It is plain that already Boswell was planning to make out of his connection with his "illustrious friend" a ladder to fame.

Letter 68

page 153. the matrimonial lottery. Lord Lyttelton's happy first marriage was cut short by the death of his wife at the age of twenty-nine. His second marriage proved miserable and led to a separation.

154. Moore, Edward (1712–57), author of *Poems, Fables, and Plays* (1756). He is best known for his sombre tragedy *The Gamester*, produced by Garrick in 1753, Lord Lyttelton was his patron, and hoped,

as Fielding here implies, to see Moore enjoying "the laurel", as Poet Laureate. By his patron's help Moore obtained the editorship of the *World* (see Letter 60), holding the post from 1753 to 1757.

154. its present possessor. Colley Cibber (1671–1757), dramatist, author of *The Nonjuror* and many other plays, was Poet Laureate from 1730. He died in the same year as Moore, but outlived him by some nine months.

Letter 69

page 156. Garrick (1717–79): see Letter 62. For over twenty years he had been the leading actor in London. In 1747 he had taken Drury Lane Theatre, which he controlled until his retirement from the stage in 1776. His powers, both in tragedy and comedy, were amazing. His chief merit lay in his unswerving fidelity to nature. On his formidable rival Barry and himself playing Lear, the following lines were written:—

A king! aye, every inch a king,
Such Barry doth appear;
But Garrick 's quite another thing,
He 's every inch King Lear.

156. whilst in Paris. In 1763, owing to opposition, Garrick quitted the stage for a time. At the close of the Seven Years' War he went to Paris and travelled in Italy. In Paris he was warmly received. After a foreign tour of eighteen months, he returned to London and enthusiastic audiences in April, 1765.

157. your lady. A chief reason for Garrick's long stay abroad was his wife's health. [She regained strength by treatment at mud baths near Padua.]

157. Powell was a young actor at Drury Lane, trained by Garrick himself. He made his debut the month after Garrick left for Paris, and became a great favourite.

157. hobihorsically, whimsically, a favourite term with Sterne (Cf. *Tristram Shandy*, ii, 5, and iii, 22—"The generous, though hobby-horsical, gallantry of my uncle Toby"). A hobby-horse is a wicker frame shaped like a horse and fastened round the waist of a performer, whose feet are then concealed with deep housings.

Letter 70

page 159. Gray, Thomas (1716–71), the poet and scholar, best known by his *Elegy*. His great antiquarian knowledge, his wide historical reading, and his researches in the ancient literatures of Northern Europe made him a very formidable critic of Macpherson's first book, *Fragments of Ancient Poetry* (1760).

159. John Home (1724–1808), Scottish poet and divine, made his name in literature by his tragedy *Douglas* (1756).

160. Greek rhapsodists, i.e. ῥαψῳδοί, members of a kind of bardic guild devoted to the recitation of Epic poetry, particularly the poems of Homer.

161. **Adam Smith** (1723–90), professor of Moral Philosophy at Glasgow. His great work is *An Enquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776). He also made a valuable contribution to philosophy in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, published in 1759.

162. **the Epic poem mentioned.** In his Preface to his *Ossian*, Macpherson quotes the opening lines of an Epic poem "translated from the Norse to the Gaelic language; and, from the latter, tranferred into English". He gives a prose, and then a verse rendering, submitting the two forms to the verdict of his readers.

162. **the Hebrew**. Hebrew poetry, even in specimens so early as the song of Deborah, is remarkably regular, observing its own rules of line, verse, rhythm, strophe, and particularly of "parallelism"—the characteristic of Semitic verse.

163. **Shenstone's famous ballad**. William Shenstone (1714–63) was a contemporary of Johnson at Pembroke College, Oxford. He is remembered by his poem the *Schoolmistress*, partly composed at the University and published in 1742. Horace Walpole, who sneered at the performances of most writers, called Shenstone "a water-gruel bard"; but Johnson, Goldsmith, and afterwards Burns, showed warm appreciation. Hume quotes the opening lines of Shenstone's *Pastoral Ballad*, which, with other poems, appeared in Dodsley's *Collection* (1748). The *Ballad* continues:

> Should Corydon's happen to stray,
> Oh! call the poor wanderers home.

Letter 71

page 165. **character**, style of type. It is so used by John Evelyn, who, describing the fine printing done by the Elzevirs, speaks of their books as "renowned for the politeness of the character".

165. **by accident**. The "Advertisement" prefaced by Dodsley to the *Elegy* was: "The following Poem came into my hands by accident, if the general approbation, with which this little piece has been spread, may be called by so light a term as accident. It is this approbation which makes it unnecessary for me to make any apology but to the author. As he cannot but feel some satisfaction in having pleased so many readers already, I flatter myself he will forgive my communicating that pleasure to many more." The dexterity of the opening sentence suggests the clever pen of Horace Walpole.

Letter 72

page 166. **a great leviathan**. This skeleton of a whale is said to be now in the Museum cellars.

167. **Dr. Pocock**, Bishop of Ossory, a traveller and author of *A Description of the East*.

167. **Dr. Stukely**, an antiquary of some note, was rector of the parish of St. George's near the Museum.

167. Harleian Catalogue. The basis of the library formed in connection with the British Museum was a famous collection of MSS. and books made by Robert Harley, Earl of Oxford (died 1724).

167. the Clarendon book, the *Life of Edward, Earl of Clarendon*, issued in 1759. It forms a sequel to the Earl's *History of the Great Rebellion*, and was one of the earliest works printed at the Clarendon Press, in Oxford, a building which was erected mainly from the profits derived from the *History*.

167. The invasion. The Seven Years' War (1756-63), in which France attacked, and Britain defended, Prussia, was now at its height. As Gray wrote these words, General Wolfe was lying off Quebec waiting for his chance. Just two months later he was to meet death and imperishable renown on the Heights of Abraham. It was while his troops were being rowed to their landing place that Wolfe, seated in the stern of a boat, recited Gray's *Elegy*, adding: "I would prefer being the author of that poem to the glory of beating the French to-morrow".

167. Lady Essex had just died in childbirth.

167. a frank. See Appendix.

Letter 73

page **169. a ghost**, the famous ghost of Cock Lane, in the City of London. A house where a lady had died in sad circumstances was said to be haunted by her spirit. One of the rooms, occupied by two girls, was said to be disturbed at night by knockings and scratchings. The case aroused the greatest interest, titled visitors streaming to Cock Lane. "I went to hear it," says Horace Walpole, "for it is not an *apparition*, but an *audition*." Goldsmith made three guineas out of the sensation by writing a pamphlet, *The Mystery Revealed*. Ultimately some gentlemen, foremost among whom was Dr. Johnson, traced the noises to one of the two girls.

169. Lady Mary Wortley (1689–1762), see Letters 45 *seq*. Owing to the death of her husband (1761) she returned to England by way of Rotterdam early in 1762, and died in August of the same year. The last of her many letters was written in July.

170. Helvoet or Hellevoetsluis, a port near Rotterdam.

Letter 74

page **171. the State Trials**, reports of all trials for offences against the state. The third edition, in eight volumes, was issued in 1742.

172. Old Ballads, Percy's *Reliques*. See Letter 58, notes.

172. Pepys's Collection in the library of Magdalen College, Cambridge. See introduction to Letter 19.

172. huckaback, stout linen cloth from which towels are made.

172. treillage, trelliswork.

172. Tom Hearne (1678–1735), an eminent Oxford antiquary, under-librarian of the Bodleian. He appears in Pope's *Dunciad* (iii, 185) as "Wormius".

Letter 76

page 175. the Saxon language, i.e. Middle English. It is so used by Goldsmith, who, quoting a line from an old poem:

Lollai, lollai, littel childe, why weppest tou so sore?

speaks of it as written "in Saxon before the time of Chaucer".

175. Rowley's text. Thomas Rowley was the medieval monk whom Chatterton alleged to be the author of the poems stated to have been found in the church of St. Mary, Redcliffe.

175. my "Anecdotes", *i.e. Anecdotes of Painting in England*, a historical work published in 1762.

175. John Eyck's discovery. Jan van Eyck, or Jean de Bruges, was born near Liège in 1370. As a painter he was famous for the brilliance and freshness of his tones, the secret of which he committed to his pupils. There has been much controversy regarding his relation to oil-painting, some asserting him to be the author of the process, others maintaining that it was known to the Neapolitans.

Letter 77

page 176. Monthly Review. The two chief reviews of this period were the *Monthly* and the *Critical*. In his interview with the king Johnson was asked his opinion of both. He replied that the *Monthly* was "done with most care", the *Critical* "upon the best principles".

177. Herculaneum, near Naples, was overwhelmed and buried by the eruption of Vesuvius, 79 A.D. In 1709 the lost site was discovered by the sinking of a well, which disclosed the stage of a theatre at a depth of some 70 feet. Systematic exploration was begun by the French in 1806.

177. Hudibras, by Samuel Butler (1600–80), a mock epic satirizing the Puritans, the first part of which was published in 1663.

Letter 78

page 178. tant mieux, so much the better.

178. valences (better valances), probably derived from Valence, a town in France, are short curtains generally seen round beds.

178. Boswell's book, *The Life of Dr. Johnson*, was published May 16, 1791, in two quarto volumes, a supplementary volume being added in 1794. It is clear that Walpole lost no time in reading the book, but he failed to appreciate the greatness which subsequent readers have universally acknowledged. Macaulay, in his essay *On Boswell's Life of Johnson*, calls it "one of the best books in the world", and sums up Boswell's merits and demerits as a friend and biographer

in his own trenchant style. "He was a slave proud of his servitude, a Paul Pry, convinced that his own curiosity and garrulity were virtues, an unsafe companion who never scrupled to repay the most liberal hospitality by the basest violation of confidence, a man without delicacy, without shame, without sense enough to know when he was hurting the feelings of others, or when he was exposing himself to derision; and because he was all this he has, in an important department of literature, immeasurably surpassed such writers as Tacitus, Clarendon, Alfieri, and his own idol Johnson."

179. **Mrs. Montagu** is mentioned by Boswell as "the literary lady". Johnson is reported to have said nothing severe of her except "she does not know Greek, and, I fancy, knows little Latin. She is willing you should think she knows them." On the other hand he praised her as "a very extraordinary woman" with "a constant stream of conversation", which "has always meaning".

179. **Gentleman's Magazine**, the property of Cave the bookseller, was, as Boswell tells us, for many years Johnson's "principal source for employment and support". For it he reported the debates in the Houses of Parliament, disguised, to avoid any breach of Parliamentary privilege, as the deliberations of "The Senate of Lilliput". Horace Walpole would naturally resent the care with which Johnson, the Tory, in reporting speeches of Sir Robert Walpole and other Whigs, saw to it that "the Whig dogs did not get the best of it".

179. **Mason**, William (1725–97), himself a poet, wrote the *Memoirs* of his close friend the poet Gray. They appeared with Mason's edition of Gray's poems (1775).

180. **Gray's poetry**. Johnson's failure to appreciate Gray was extraordinary. He allowed that the *Elegy* had "a happy selection of images", but he called Gray "a dull fellow, dull in company, dull in his closet, dull everywhere. He was dull in a new way, and that made many people think him great."

180. **another pamphlet**, Burke's *Letter to a Member of the National Assembly* (published 1791), in which he shows the fierce hatred which he now began to cherish for the democratic movement in France.

180. **its predecessor**. Burke's *Reflections on the French Revolution*, published Nov., 1790, was a small octavo volume of some 360 pages, and sold for five shillings. It was an ardent and eloquent attack on the principles of the Revolution, and made a profound impression throughout Britain. Cf. Letter 86.

Letter 80

page 183. **Manuscript Glossary**, a list of quaint words invented by Chatterton with the aid of an Anglo-Saxon vocabulary, or simply coined by his prodigious imagination.

183. **Lord Mayor's remonstrating**. The Lord Mayor Beckford was the champion of the popular leader John Wilkes (1727–97). On May 23, 1770, Beckford, accompanied by the aldermen of the City, sought an

audience of the king, and presented a resolute remonstrance complaining of a false return in the Middlesex election. George III gave him a curt answer. Instead of accepting this as the close of the audience, Beckford, contrary to all rule, replied to the king, a bold act which made him the hero of the people. Unfortunately for Chatterton, Beckford died shortly afterwards.

184. **methodistical,** derived from the "people called Methodists", is used freely about this time as a term of reproach. Probably its first use in literature is by Fielding, who in *Tom Jones* (1749) speaks of "methodistical notions".

Letter 81

page 186. **great Cham.** Cham, an obsolete form of Khan, is the name given in early travels and voyages to the rulers of the Tartars, and to the Emperor of China (the Cam, or Cham, of Cathay). Smollett mentions the Cham in *Roderick Random* (1748). The squire, having emptied at a breath the "silver caudle-cup" holding a quart of liquor, is pronounced qualified "to drink with the Cham of Tartary" (chapter lvi).

186. **has been pressed.** Smollett is in error here. Boswell mentions the incident, stating that the "negro servant" left Johnson and went to sea of his own accord—"not pressed as has been supposed".

186. **cater-cousins;** Cf. Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*, ii, 2, 139. The derivation of the word is doubtful. That which presents least difficulty is from cater, to supply with "cates" or food. It is then a form similar to foster-brother, and denotes persons who, by boarding together, are on terms of cousinship or intimacy.

Letter 82

page 188. **the friar's end,** i.e. becoming a recluse or mendicant. Goldsmith may have had in mind *The Friar of Orders Grey*, which appeared in Percy's *Reliques*.

188. **the mischief is, they . . . their.** It seems as though we ought to read here *it* and *its*. Goldsmith is plainly deprecating the company, not of the Muses, but of poverty.

189. **Lishoy** or Lissoy, in West Meath, Goldsmith's Irish home.

189. **Johnny Armstrong's Last Good Night.** The famous border ballad of *Johnny Armstrong* found its way into print as early as 1658. It is the story of a Westmorland freebooter who encountered King James V of Scotland. Dr. Johnson, in discussing Gray's *Odes* with Boswell, quoted "the old song of Johnny Armstrong" as an instance of a poem in which "you plunge at once into the subject". Goldsmith had a great fondness for the old ballad. He refers to it in the *Vicar of Wakefield* (chapter iv): "While one played, the other would sing some soothing ballad—Johnny Armstrong's Last Good Night, or the Cruelty of Barbara Allen". It appears twice in his series of Essays called *The Bee* (1759).

189. Hampstead. What is known as the Percy edition of Goldsmith's works (begun by Dr. Percy and completed in 1801 by Samuel Rose, Cowper's friend) prints *Flamstead.* [Where was Flamstead Hill? The Royal Observatory, at the top of Greenwich Hill, was once called Flamsteed House, from the name of the first Astronomer Royal; and it is suggested that this name was at one time given to Greenwich Hill.]

189. from the blue bed to the brown. This is suggestive of some early sentences in the *Vicar of Wakefield*: "All our adventures were by the fireside, and all our migrations from the blue bed to the brown". Late in 1764 the *Vicar* was sold by Johnson on Goldsmith's behalf for £60. It appeared in March, 1766. For some years before 1764, Goldsmith must have been working at intervals on the tale, as a relief from his compilations and hackwork.

Letter 83

page 192. my book with Mr. Dodsley, the book which gave Goldsmith his first reputation, *An Enquiry into the Present State of Polite Learning* (April, 1759). This letter to Griffiths marks the darkest point in Goldsmith's career. After the publication of the *Enquiry* his fortunes began to mend.

192. Dr. Milner, a Presbyterian divine, head of the Peckham Academy, where Goldsmith was usher. At his house Goldsmith first met Griffiths. Griffiths apparently insinuates that Milner did not know Goldsmith's real character. Milner, however, showed great kindness to Goldsmith. He had a friend among the East India Directors and obtained for Goldsmith the offer of a medical appointment on the Coromandel Coast. It was to qualify for this post that Goldsmith appeared—in vain—before the Examiners for the College of Surgeons.

Letter 84

page 193. a farmer's house. In another letter Goldsmith describes the situation more exactly—"Farmer Selby's, at the six mile stone, Edgware Road". He entertained Johnson and Reynolds there. The house was still standing when Forster published his *Life of Goldsmith* (1848); and the inmates had a tradition of Goldsmith reading in bed and putting his candle out by flinging a slipper at it.

193. whether it will be acted. *She Stoops to Conquer* was brought out by Colman, who constantly predicted its failure. So slow was he in arranging for the rehearsal that Goldsmith, but for the dissuasion of Johnson, would have transferred it to Garrick. Colman thought the play too low and farcical for his sentimental patrons. It was finally produced in March, 1773, and from the outset proved a triumphant success.

193. Lady Rothes. Bennet Langton married the Dowager Countess of Rothes.

193. Beauclerc, Topham. See Letter 58.

193. a second Boyle. Robert Boyle (1626–91), one of the founders of the Royal Society, was an illustrious pioneer in experimental science, following the lead of Bacon, and preparing the way for Newton. He was the first to promulgate the law in physics known by his name.

193. en attendant, while awaiting. In 1769 Burke bought an estate at Beaconsfield (Bucks), desiring to grow into a country squire. He had a deep reverence for what he called "the ancient, native, genuine, English character of a country gentleman"—the true barrier, as he held, against despotism, alike of the throne and of the mob.

193. Natural History, *The History of the Earth and of Animated Nature.* This was Goldsmith's heaviest undertaking, and proved a millstone round his neck. It was in eight volumes, and Goldsmith received 100 guineas a volume; but as 500 guineas were paid before the work was well begun, he was at this time (1772) "in the condition rather of one working off a heavy debt than one working for expected wages". It was published in 1774, shortly after his death.

194. an Abridgement. This was a summary of Goldsmith's *History of England from the Earliest Times to the Death of George II* (4 vols., 1771).

194. Squire Richard is an amusing booby in Colley Cibber's play *The Provoked Husband*, produced in 1728. This play was worked up from an incomplete comedy, *The Journey to London*, left by Sir John Vanbrugh, to whom the credit of this character and many of the situations is mainly due. Squire Richard is the eldest son of a country gentleman, Sir Francis Wronghead of Bumper Hall (Vanbrugh's Sir Francis Headpiece), and is described in the *dramatis personæ* as "a mere whelp". He has a broad Midland accent, is ignorant of the world and letters, and enjoys an allowance of "haulf-a-crown a week". The part was made popular by the clever impersonation of a young Drury Lane actor, Robert Wetherelt.

Letter 85

page 195. Fitzherbert. William Fitzherbert was a member of the Rockingham ministry (1765–6); and Burke is said to have owed to this friend his post as private secretary to Lord Rockingham. Johnson said of him: "I never knew a man who was so generally acceptable. . . . He was an instance of the truth of the observation, that a man will please more upon the whole by negative qualities than by positive; by never offending, than by giving a great deal of delight."

196. no fair man. There was no substantial ground for suspecting Burke, says Lord Morley, except the "two unconnected facts, that the letters were powerful letters, and that Burke had a powerful intellect". Johnson said that his reason for entertaining the idea was that he knew no one but Burke who had the ability of Junius. When Burke stated that he had not written the letters, Johnson accepted that as final.

196. an able performance. "Junius", says Lord Morley, "is

never more than a railer, and very often he is third-rate even as a railer." Burke's manner is quite different. "Instead of reviling, he probes, he reflects, he warns." [It is generally thought that "Junius" was Sir Philip Francis. See Letter 86. The argument is stated forcibly by Macaulay in his *Warren Hastings*. It is probable that Francis had some assistance.]

Letter 86

page 198. the only friend. Burke's chief political friend was Charles James Fox, the successor to Lord Rockingham in the leadership of the Whigs. His great literary friends were Sir Joshua Reynolds and Dr. Johnson. His friendship with Francis was, as he here states, of a peculiar nature. Over their attitude to the French Revolution Fox and Burke quarrelled hopelessly. Fox was enthusiastic about the Revolution. "How much the greatest event it is," he cried, "that ever happened to the world!" His devotion to Burke led him to strive against a quarrel. On the eve of the rupture he spoke generously in the House of Commons of his debt to his friend, asserting that, if all the political information he had learned from books, all his gains from science, and all that he had been taught by his knowledge of the world were put in a scale over against the improvement he had derived from Burke's "instruction and conversation", he could not decide which to prefer. But Burke declined to continue the old intimacy. "I know the price of my conduct," he said publicly. "I have done my duty at the price of my friend. Our friendship is at an end."

198. their services of this kind, Burke's friends in the Literary Club seem all to have stood in some awe of what M. Taine calls "the first mind of the age". When Goldsmith ventured to criticize Johnson, it was by contrasting him with Burke: "Is he like Burke, who winds into a subject like a serpent?" When Johnson warned his follower not to accept extraordinary statements about people, Boswell reminded him of Burke. "Yes," was the answer, "Burke *is* an extraordinary man. His stream of mind is perpetual." It was said of Gibbon that he might have been taken from a corner of Burke's mind without being missed. But Johnson truly said that Burke lacked wit. "He is, indeed, continually attempting wit, but he fails." Goldsmith's sketch of Burke in the poem *Retaliation* probably sums up the verdict of the leaders of the Literary Club. He paints him as one—

> Who, born for the universe, narrowed his mind,
> And to party gave up what was meant for mankind;
> Though fraught with all learning, yet straining his throat
> To persuade Tommy Townshend to lend him a vote;
> Who, too deep for his hearers, still went on refining,
> And thought of convincing, while they thought of dining;
> Though equal to all things, for all things unfit;
> Too nice for a statesman, too proud for a wit,
> For a patriot too cool, for a drudge disobedient,
> And too fond of the *right* to pursue the *expedient*.

199. my Paris letter. Burke visited Paris in 1773, and at Versailles

saw Marie Antoinette, then the young dauphiness. Soon after his return he began to lift his voice strongly against the menace of atheism, describing infidels as "outlaws of the constitution, not of this country, but of the human race".

200. Messalina, wife of the Emperor Claudius, was notorious for her infamous vices. She was executed by the order of her husband (44 A.D.).

201. What's Hecuba, &c. Cf. *Hamlet*, ii, 2, 585.

201. to prove the crimes. The sentence is somewhat confused. It seems to mean: Those who applaud assassination must, by the evidence of popular suffering, prove the crimes which they allege against rulers, before they can justify their own.

201. the chivalrous spirit. Burke is referring throughout this paragraph to what Lord Morley calls "one of the most gorgeous pages in our literature", the description of the Dauphiness at Versailles in *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. He had written: "The age of chivalry is gone, that of sophisters, economists, and calculators has succeeded; and the glory of Europe is extinguished for ever. . . . It is gone, that sensibility of principle, that chastity of honour, which felt a stain like a wound, which inspired courage, whilst it mitigated ferocity, which ennobled whatever it touched, and under which vice itself lost half its evil by losing all its grossness."

202. the recollection. "I saw her just above the horizon, decorating and cheering the elevated sphere she just began to move in; glittering like the morning star, full of life, and splendour, and joy." (*Ibid.*)

202. the abominable scene. In Oct., 1789, the mob of Paris marched to Versailles, stormed the palace, and, after the slaughter of the guards, brought the king and queen as prisoners to the city.

203. "Revolution Society", a semi-religious organization formed to maintain the principles of the Revolution of 1688. It met in strength on Nov. 4, the anniversary of the landing of William of Orange.

203. the advowson of reputation, the right of disposing of reputation. Burke's credit did not depend on the opinion of either English and French revolutionaries or the party of Warren Hastings, whose trial, begun in 1788, was then in progress. Advowson (derived, through French, from *advocationem*, patronage) is the right enjoyed by a patron of presenting to a benefice.

203. Dr. Price had preached at the annual ceremonies of the "Revolution Society" in 1789, and had extolled the French for having improved upon the achievements of the English Revolution.

203. Lord Shelburne, the leader of a section of the Whigs, in rivalry to Fox. On the death of Rockingham (1782), he became Prime Minister, but held the office barely eight months. To him and to Lord North, Crabbe, beginning his literary career in London, applied in vain for help.

Letter 87

page 205. **for two people**, Cowper and a manservant, whom he describes as "the very mirror of fidelity and affection".

205. **St. James's Chronicle**, a rival of the *Monthly* and the *Critical* Reviews, was held in repute for its literary verdicts. It was about 1761 (when Cowper was a contributor) under the editorship of George Colman. First among the oracles of the press to praise Goldsmith's *Traveller* (1765), it ignored *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766).

206. **geese and gridirons**, a humorous reference to distraining for unpaid rent. Cowper suggests that, when Hill could get nothing else, he would take the cottager's goose off the common or the gridiron from the kitchen.

206. **I leave him.** Cowper's little patrimony was practically swept away, when he left the asylum. All that remained to him, beside the contributions of friends, was the rent of his chambers in the Temple. These were now occupied by a bad tenant; and Hill was taking steps to recover arrears.

206. **Colman**, George (1733–94), dramatist, author of *The Jealous Wife*. He conducted two periodicals, *The Connoisseur* and *St. James's Chronicle*. The death of his uncle, Lord Bath, and later of his mother, brought him money, with which he purchased a share in Covent Garden Theatre. Here early in 1768 he produced Goldsmith's *Good-Natured Man*, and in 1773 *She Stoops to Conquer*.

Letter 88

page 207. **Gray's Works**, evidently including Mason's *Life and Letters of Gray* (published 1775). How different was the verdict of Johnson, who could scarcely see merit even in the *Elegy*!

207. **sublime.** It is strange that Milton is not brought in under this heading.

208. **our Thursday society**, i.e. the Nonsense Club, consisting of Cowper, George Colman, and five other Westminster men, who dined together every Thursday.

Letter 89

page 208. **Johnson's biography.** The first four volumes of Johnson's "Prefaces", or *Lives of the Poets*, were published in 1779, the remaining six in 1781. They were written by agreement with a group of London booksellers as prefaces to a new collection of the English poets. The price agreed upon was 200 guineas; but, the work growing considerably beyond the original intention, Johnson ultimately received 400 guineas.

209. **condemnation upon Lycidas.** Johnson's language would be cruel, if the verdict were not preposterous. "The diction is harsh, the

rhymes uncertain, and the numbers unpleasing. . . . In this poem there is no nature, for there is no truth; there is no art, for there is nothing new. Its form is that of a pastoral; easy, vulgar, and therefore disgusting."

210. unfitness of the English language. "The variety of pauses, so much boasted by the lovers of blank verse, changes the measure of an English poet to the periods of a declaimer; and there are only a few skilful and happy readers of Milton, who enable their audience to perceive where the lines end or begin." Johnson, however sums up: "But, whatever be the advantage of rhyme, I cannot prevail on myself to wish that Milton had been a rhymer; for I cannot wish his work to be other than it is".

210. two miniature pictures, William Unwin's two sons, educated by their father at home. A few years later Cowper dedicated to Unwin the poem *Tirocinium, or a Review of Schools*, the object of which was to recommend home education.

Letter 91

page 212. Oney, the local pronunciation of Olney. Olney is a small town in Buckinghamshire, on the Ouse, here a slow and winding river. In Cowper's day it was inhabited mainly by lacemakers.

213. Charity, one of the subjects suggested by Mrs. Unwin. The poem appeared with *Retirement*, *Table Talk*, *The Progress of Error*, and others in Cowper's first book (1782). The influence of Pope is seen in such lines as:—

> Again—the band of commerce was designed
> To associate all the branches of mankind;
> And, if a boundless plenty be the robe,
> Trade is the golden girdle of the globe.
>
> Each climate needs what other climes produce,
> And offers something to the general use;
> No land but listens to the common call,
> And in return receives supply from all.

213. the Reviewer. What the reviewer *did* say may be read in the *Critical Review*. "Mr. Cowper seems to be a man of a sober and religious turn of mind . . . he is not, however, possessed of any superior abilities or the power of genius requisite for so arduous an undertaking." No one detected the rise of an "original and at the same time serious and charming poet", as Sainte-Beuve styles Cowper.

Letter 92

page 215. one in Essex, *i.e.* William Unwin's library, from which Cowper borrowed freely. Unwin was at this time rector of Stock in Essex.

215. Johnson's Prefaces. The issue of the *Lives of the Poets* was completed in 1781.

215. contempt upon Prior. Johnson says of Prior's love poems: "They have the coldness of Cowley, without his wit, the dull exercises of a skilful versifier, resolved at all adventures to write something about Chloe, and trying to be amorous by dint of study". *Henry and Emma* he styles "a dull and tedious dialogue, which excites neither esteem for the man nor tenderness for the woman". Prior's main success was in his familiar and occasional verse (cf. his lines *To Mezeray*), and for this Cowper had such a warm admiration, that he persuaded himself the same poetic qualities were to be found in *Henry and Emma*, a poem which he pronounced "inimitable". "The true estimate of Prior's genius", says Professor Courthope, "seems to lie between the depreciation of Johnson and the appreciation of Pope" (*History of English Poetry*, vol. v).

216. the Alma, a humorous poetical dialogue in which Prior and a friend discuss various speculations on the relation of body and spirit and the vanity of all human science. It is strange that Cowper should controvert Johnson's statement so positively; for Prior in the second canto describes himself as the "mimic of his master's dance", and the form of the dialogue has a decided resemblance to the form of the disputations between Hudibras and his squire Ralpho. Alma (borrowed from the *Faery Queen*, ii, 9, 18, where she commands in "Body Castle") is the human spirit or mind; and the language in which she is discussed occasionally catches the twang of *Hudibras*.

> I say, whatever you maintain
> Of Alma in the heart or brain,
> The plainest man alive may tell ye
> Her seat of empire is the belly.

216. To what mean artifices. This must refer to Addison's relations either with Pope or with Steele. Cowper accepts the strictures of Johnson without criticism. Johnson agrees with Pope that Tickell's *Iliad, Book I*, was really the work of Addison, and says that its failure must have caused him "the most painful of all reflections, the remembrance of a crime perpetrated in vain"! (*Life of Pope*). If "his friend" is Steele, Cowper's charge must rest on a statement in the *Life of Addison* as baseless as that just mentioned. Macaulay has shown that, when Addison as *The Old Whig* spoke of "little Dicky", he was making fun, not of Steele, but of an actor of the day.

216. Beattie. See Letter 55.

216. the Minstrel. The first part was published in 1771, the complete poem in 1774. Its purpose, as the writer says, is "to trace the progress of a poetical genius, born in a rude age, from the first dawning of fancy and reason".

Letter 93

page **219. pay double postage.** The regular rate of postage covered only a single sheet of writing-paper, which, as there was no envelope, was folded and sealed to make a packet and cover the writing. The tiniest extra sheet inserted in this involved a double rate of postage.

220. the sofa for the subject. *The Task* is in six books, the first of which is entitled *The Sofa.* It opens:

> I sing the Sofa. I who lately sang
> Truth, Hope and Charity, and touched with awe
> The solemn chords, and with a trembling hand,
> Escaped with pain from that adventurous flight,
> Now seek repose upon an humbler theme.

Book I contains a tribute to Mrs. Unwin, whom the poet calls the—

> Dear companion of my walks,
> Whose arm this twentieth winter I perceive
> Fast locked in mine, with pleasure such as love,
> Confirmed by long experience of thy worth
> And well-tried virtues, could alone inspire.

220. the Bull, the Rev. William Bull, minister at Newport Pagnell, five miles from Olney. It was he who set Cowper to translating the poems of Madame Guyon.

220. Gentleman's Magazine, to which Dr. Johnson contributed his reports of Parliamentary debates. See Letter 78.

221. Henriade, Voltaire's main poetical work (published 1723). It is a tedious epic in the classical style, and merits the disrepute into which it has fallen.

Letter 94

page 223. Mr. Throckmorton appears as Benevolus in *The Task* (Book I):

> Thanks to Benevolus—he spares me yet
> These chestnuts ranged in corresponding lines.

Letter 95

page 225. Boswell's Tour, the *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides*, published 1785. It describes the journey undertaken with Johnson in 1773, and depicted by the latter in his *Journey to the Hebrides.* Johnson is said to have shown a little jealousy of Boswell's attempt to make capital of the same incidents. Boswell therefore postponed publication until after Johnson's death (Dec., 1784).

225. Sir John, i.e. Sir John Hawkins (1719–89), one of Johnson's executors and editor of an edition of his works. He published the first important memoir of Johnson (1787), which Boswell calls "Sir John Hawkins's ponderous labours" or "his bulky tome".

225. a coxcomb. Originally a professional fool, who wears as badge a cock's comb. Johnson defines it as "a superficial pretender to knowledge or accomplishments". Arbuthnot, in his *History of John Bull*, calls one a coxcomb for "pretending to be wiser than his companions".

Letter 96

page 226. fidelity of the copy. Cf. the lines *On the Receipt of my Mother's Picture*:

> Those lips are thine—thy own sweet smiles I see,
> The same that oft in childhood solaced me.

Cowper stated that this poem gave him more pleasure in the writing than any other except the lines *To Mrs. Unwin.*

226. more of the Donne. Cowper's mother was Anne Donne. Her family could trace its descent by four different lines from Henry III. Cowper was proud of the relationship, mainly because it linked him to John Donne, Dean of St. Paul's. (See Letters 8 and 9.)

227. your nephew, John Johnson, the depth of whose devotion to Cowper has recently, from unpublished sources, been brought to light by Professor Dowden (*Essays Modern and Elizabethan*).

228. at Berkhamstead, in the rectory of which Cowper was born.

228. his kindness to my Homer, in securing subscribers. "It is pleasant", says Walter Bagehot (*Literary Studies*, vol. i) "to observe the healthy facility with which one of the shyest men in the world set himself to extract guineas from every one he had ever heard of."

Letter 97

page 229. Horace Walpole was now nearly seventy-five, and was beginning to cultivate that retirement in which he closed his life (1797). See Letter 78. One of his last letters tells us how, when any of his "fourscore nephews and nieces" came to visit him, he felt like "the Methusaleh of the family".

229. as pig a gentleman, a humorous reference to the pronunciation of the Welshman Fluellen, who calls Alexander the Great "Alexander the Pig" (*Henry V*, iv, 7, 13). Cowper has in mind some later words of Fluellen's, in the same scene: "Though he be as good a gentleman as the devil is, as Lucifer and Beelzebub himself".

229. the Hall, Weston Hall, the residence of the Throckmortons.

Letter 98

page 231. Mr. Rose. See Letter 95. "That friendly little being", as Lady Hesketh described him, was now a barrister.

231. General Cowper, the poet's cousin, who as Major Cowper had obtained for him the clerkship in the House of Lords, and later had made him an allowance on his recovery from the first period of insanity.

Letter 99

page 232. a house in the city. Most of Milton's life was spent in London city, and he resided long in the neighbourhood of Aldersgate. Here he wrote *Paradise Lost*, selling it in April, 1667, for the sum of five pounds, stipulating that he should receive five pounds more, when 1300 copies had been sold.

233. dreams of Pindus. An obscure reference. The Pindus range, running north and south, is the barrier between Thessaly and Epirus, and forms the backbone of Northern Greece. Virgil (*Eclogues*, x, 8) mentions together the peaks of Parnassus and Pindus; and Servius the grammarian, in a note on the passage, says *ambo Apollini et Musis consecrati*, implying that Pindus had some association with the worship of the Muses. Cowper's phrase would then mean such dreams as the Muses give their devotees, the poets; but the reference sounds forced on Cowper's lips. [Was he quoting some fanciful phrase of Hayley's?]

233. Lippus, purblind. In the earlier part of this letter Cowper complains that he is "perpetually tormented with inflamed eyes". He cannot see at all by candlelight; and his work on Homer is delayed.

Letter 100

page 235. at Catfield, where Cowper's maternal uncle, Roger Donne (grandfather of John Johnson), had been rector.

235. Mr. Johnson was now giving all his time to watching over the poet, with whom he lived till the end. Of evenings he read to him such books as Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*. During the years 1797–8 he roused Cowper to revise and improve his *Iliad*.

Letter 101

page 236. a very sedentary animal. Gibbon had never a profession. From 1779 to 1782 he filled the post of a Lord of Trade, with a handsome salary. Apart from these three years, and two years as a militia officer, his life was spent in study. In his *Memoirs* he speaks of his "studious and sedentary life" at Lausanne, where he often read for twelve hours a day. He expressed regret that he had not "embraced the lucrative pursuits of the law or of trade, the chances of civil office or India adventure, or even the fat slumbers of the Church". He was now an M.P.

237. received by men of letters. The historians Hume and Robertson were warm in their praise of Gibbon's first volume. Hume, however, foretold the objections that would arise against Gibbon's treatment of the rise of Christianity (Chaps. xv and xvi): "It was impossible to treat the subject so as not to give grounds of suspicion against you; and you may expect that a clamour will arise". Within seven weeks the orthodox Boswell had discovered that, though the book was "written in a very mellifluous style", it "contained much artful infidelity".

Letter 103

page 238. **shopping, packing.** In 1783 Gibbon had moved, with his books, to Lausanne. On the completion of his history in 1787, he revisited London, where in April, 1788, the last three volumes were issued. He was now preparing to return to Lausanne with vague plans for other literary ventures. The death of his friend Deyverdun disturbed these; and in 1789 he occupied himself in compiling his *Memoirs*.

238. Tuft, a pet dog.

238. the august scene, the trial of Warren Hastings, which opened in Westminster Hall, Feb. 13, 1788. It lasted till 1795, when Hastings was acquitted. The managers for the Commons were Burke, Fox, and Sheridan—the two last styled by Macaulay, in his account of the trial, "the English Demosthenes and the English Hyperides".

238. Middleton, Resident of Lucknow, Hastings' agent in negotiating the Treaty of Chunar with Asaph-ud-Daulah, the Nawab of Oudh.

238. a compliment, much admired. Sheridan's speech lasted through four sittings. On the fourth day he made the reference which so pleased Gibbon. Speaking of the alleged crimes of Hastings, he declared that, to find anything to surpass them, his hearers would search in vain the records of the world, the "sentences of Tacitus or the luminous page of Gibbon". The event is recorded in the *Memoirs*, where Gibbon adds: "It is not my province to absolve or condemn the Governor of India, but Mr. Sheridan's eloquence demanded my applause; nor could I hear without emotion the personal compliment that he paid me in the presence of the British nation".

238. Severy, Gibbon's courier and secretary. He was a young Swiss of some education, and served Gibbon in several capacities.

Letter 104

page 239. **the English post.** The country traversed by the post from England to Switzerland was in a disturbed state owing to the war which had broken out in 1792 between France and the allied powers of Austria, Russia, Prussia, and Spain. Austrian and Prussian armies invaded France by way of the Netherlands.

240. the French Rhine. British indignation at the execution of Louis XVI (Jan., 1793) forced Pitt to join (Feb., 1793) in the European struggle against France. The early period of the war was marked by unusual bitterness on both sides. To avoid the Upper Rhineland, where the usual road through Strasburg might be unsafe for Englishmen, Gibbon proposes to bear to the east, following a roundabout way through Stuttgart.

Letter 105

page 242. **our allied arms.** England formed with Holland, Austria, and Spain the First Coalition against France early in 1793. In March considerable successes were gained by the Austrians operating

against the French general Dumouriez, who was forced almost to evacuate Belgium. In the south the French troops fell back into Alsace. Gibbon therefore proposed to travel by Basle instead of by Stuttgart.

242. the English town. The British fleet was operating on the Flemish coast, and Gibbon hints that Calais may again be what it was, until it was lost by Queen Mary (1558), an English port.

242. your Chevalier, Severy.

Letter 106

page 245. I will exert myself. Sheridan's words are almost amusingly at variance with the thoughtlessness for others, which he often showed, and the happy-go-lucky ways which were largely responsible for overwhelming him with debt. During these years his care for the interests of the theatre suffered by his devotion to the business of the House of Commons, where he was the devoted friend of Fox (d. 1806) and the spokesman of the Prince Regent.

245. the Piazza Coffee-house. According to Moore's story, it was at this coffee-house that Sheridan sat and watched the blazing of his new theatre (1809), taking, as he said to one who commented on his coolness, "a glass of wine at his own fireside".

Letter 107

page 246. Kean, Edmund (1787–1833), one of the greatest of British tragic actors. He had just (Jan., 1814) made a sensation by his performance as Shylock at Drury Lane. His style of acting, impassioned and fiery, was a marked contrast to the stateliness of Kemble, who was now at the rival theatre of Covent Garden. Sheridan is anticipating Kean's appearance as Richard III.

Letter 109

page 248. Lowndes wrote (July 2) that a "polite lady" had asked for a copy of the book, saying: "Do, Mr. Lowndes, give me *Evelina*. I am treated as unfashionable for not having read it." He added that he expected the first "impression" to be sold by Christmas. Fanny was quite unknown to Lowndes; he writes to her as "Sir". Next month, accompanied by her stepmother, Fanny visited his shop, bought a copy of *Evelina*, and asked who was the author. She was told "a gentleman at the other end of town", Lowndes, who was a pompous man, hinting "with a most important face", that the matter was a "piece of secret history", and the authorship would probably never be known. At first, he added, he had guessed Horace Walpole, who had once issued an anonymous book (*The Castle of Otranto*, 1764) in the same "snug manner". [*The Castle of Otranto* was published by Lowndes.]

248. the Monthly Review (April, 1778) was flattering in its notice

of *Evelina*. "We do not hesitate", it said, "to pronounce it one of the most sprightly, entertaining, and agreeable productions of this kind which have of late fallen under our notice."

250. Mrs. Thrale, see Letters 62–4. She attempted poetry, and appended some poems to her *Letters to and from the late Samuel Johnson*.

250. Mrs. Greville was Fanny Burney's godmother. At one time she enjoyed celebrity as the writer of the *Ode to Indifference*.

Letter 110

page 251. Kitty Cooke was the niece of Mrs. Hamilton, owner of Chessington Hall, a part of which was occupied by Mr. Crisp. Mrs. Hamilton occasionally received the Burneys as boarders.

Letter 112

page 253. this cruel day. Major Phillips, who had married Susanna Burney, was now residing in Ireland. He had come over to fetch his wife and children; and on the day mentioned they were to say farewell to Dr. Burney.

254. Mr. Burke had retired from Parliament in 1794. He accepted a pension, and was criticized for so doing by the Duke of Bedford. In defence Burke composed his most scathing work, the *Letter to a Noble Lord*. Though Burke was at this time in deep mourning for the loss of his son and his brother, he subscribed to *Camilla*, and sent £20 in payment for one copy. Among the subscribers it is pleasant to read the name of Jane Austen, an unknown authoress in her twenty-first year. She had just finished *Pride and Prejudice*, the title of which she borrowed from a phrase in *Cecilia*.

254. success of Camilla. *Camilla; or a Picture of Youth*, issued in five volumes (1796), was dedicated to the Queen. The list of subscribers was of extraordinary length. Professor Saintsbury's *sforzando diminuendo* criticism of Miss Burney's novels is worth remembering as both amusing and sound—"*Evelina* delectable; *Cecilia* admirable; *Camilla* estimable; *The Wanderer* impossible."

254. first edition of Evelina. In a letter to Dr. Burney (1782) Lowndes put the first edition at only 500. It appeared in Jan., 1778. The second and third editions are dated 1779, during the early part of which year the sales must have been brisk. "The sale for the first twelve months", says Mr. Austin Dobson, "can scarcely be regarded as extraordinary."

254. enormous at two thousand. *Cecilia* was issued in five volumes duodecimo at 12*s.* 6*d.* For the copyright Fanny Burney received £250, probably owing to Dr. Burney assisting in the negotiations. [Macaulay says she received £2000, a mistake probably due to his recollecting the number of copies printed.]

254. Charles, Fanny's brother.

Letter 113

page 256. a partial father. Crabbe's father was collector of salt duties at Aldborough, and a partner in a fishing boat. He had been a schoolmaster, and had sufficient literary taste to appreciate the love of learning in his son, who was sent to neighbouring boarding-schools.

257. Mr. Nassau was M.P. for Maldon in Essex, not far from Crabbe's home.

257. the enclosed Proposals. Crabbe was trying to secure subscribers for a volume of poems he hoped to print. Among them was *The Library*. About two hundred subscribers were obtained, mainly from Suffolk.

Letter 114

page 259. your clerkship. Scott held the legal post of Clerk of Session. For five years he had enjoyed no salary, but, after negotiations with the Treasury, he began in Jan., 1812, to draw the salary proper to his duties. This, with his emoluments as sheriff, gave him till near the end of his life a professional income of £1600 a year.

259. author of works. The *Border Minstrelsy* had appeared in 1802; *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* in 1805; *Marmion* in 1808; *The Lady of the Lake* in 1810. He was now busy with *Rokeby*, which appeared in Dec., 1812.

259. the midwives, the publishers—midwives of the book trade. Scott was very independent in his attitude towards publishers, and in 1809 formed a publishing house of his own, John Ballantyne & Co. This grew out of a printing business in which (in 1805) he had become a partner, the firm of James Ballantyne & Co. This combination of printing and publishing made Scott "totally independent" in the manner noticed by Crabbe. Unfortunately neither John nor James Ballantyne was a reliable partner. On the death of John in 1821 Scott's business affairs were in disorder, and by 1826 he was plunged into bankruptcy.

259. family of Buccleugh. The Duke of Buccleugh was Scott's neighbour at Ashestiel, and his interest secured Scott's appointment as sheriff. Lady Dalkeith, wife of the duke's heir, suggested the legend, connected with the house of Buccleugh, which Scott elaborated in the *Lay*.

260. Horne Tooke (1736–1812), a philologist of learning and distinction. His own name was John Horne. He assumed the name of Tooke from his friend and patron. He is best known for a philological work, which had considerable vogue, and which, from the name of Mr. Tooke's residence, he called *The Diversions of Purley*.

262. Mr. Hatchard (1769–1849), the founder of the publishing house, Hatchard & Son.

262. my Patron, one of the *Tales in Verse* just published by Crabbe. The theme is similar to that afterwards elaborated in Tennyson's *Lady Clara Vere de Vere*. A young farmer poet, having secured an earl as

his patron by serving him in an election, is invited to the mansion, and falls in love with the earl's sister, a lovely creature—

> Who softly smiling, while she looked so fair,
> Praised the young poet with a friendly air.

The result is disillusionment, melancholy but not so tragic as in Tennyson's poem.

Letter 115

page 263. Dodsley's Annual Register was a yearly chronicle conceived and edited by Burke, who received £100 a year for his share in the work. It appeared first in 1759, during the great events of the Seven Years' War; and Burke's connection with it continued till 1788.

263. The Village was published in 1783. The first book closes with the description of the sporting parson—

> A jovial youth, who thinks his Sunday's task
> As much as God or man can fairly ask.

263. The Library appeared in 1781. It contains a survey of the classes of literature found in a good collection of books, and descants on "the ancient worthies of Romance".

> But who are these? Methinks, a noble mien
> And awful grandeur in their form are seen—
> Now in disgrace.

The peculiar glamour of old romance is depicted in language that must have found a response in the breast of young Scott:

> Ah! happy he who thus, in magic themes,
> O'er worlds bewitched in early rapture dreams,
> Where wild Enchantment waves her potent wand,
> And Fancy's beauties fill her fairy land;
> Where doubtful objects strange desires excite,
> And Fear and Ignorance afford delight.

In a Preface dated 1807 Crabbe wrote that, when composing *The Library*, he was "assisted by the advice" of Burke; and that the whole poem was "submitted to his judgement, receiving in its progress the benefit of his correction". [The profound remark on the romantic "delight" caused by Fear and Ignorance is quite suggestive of Burke.]

264. Abhorson's trade, that of hangman. Abhorson objects to being assisted in the execution of Claudio by so discreditable a character as Pompey, on the ground that "he will discredit our mystery". Pompey retorts: "What mystery there should be in hanging, if I should be hanged, I cannot imagine" (*Measure for Measure*, iv, 2).

264. a new poetical attempt, *The Lady of the Lake*, all but completed by the end of 1809, and published in May, 1810.

264. my own labours and yours. In spite of his wide popularity Scott took an unaffectedly humble view of his poetry. When James

Ballantyne proposed to compare him with Burns, Scott replied: "We ought not to be named in the same day". He stated that he derived more pleasure from reading Johnson's *London* and *Vanity of Human Wishes* than from any other poetical composition.

Letter 116

page 266. **Heaven opens here.** It must have been while this mood of admiration was on him that Blake wrote the lines:

I stood in the streams
Of heaven's bright beams
And saw Felpham sweet
Beneath my bright feet.
.
Heavenly men, beaming bright,
Appeared as one man,
Who complacent began
My limbs to enfold
In his beams of bright gold;
Like dross purged away
All my mire and my clay.

267. a shadow. Blake calls the body the "shadow" of the soul.

267. famed in heaven. "I am", asserted Blake, "under the direction of messengers from heaven daily and nightly."

267. before my mortal life. "Knowledge of ideal beauty", according to Blake, "is not to be acquired; it is born in us." Like Wordsworth, at one period at least, Blake held to the "presumptive evidence of a prior state of existence"; cf. Wordsworth's *Ode on Intimations of Immortality* (completed 1806).

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:
The soul that rises with us, our life's star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar.

Later in the *Ode* Wordsworth speaks of—

Those shadowy recollections,
Which, be they what they may,
Are yet the fountain light of all our day,
Are yet a master light of all our seeing.

267. In the divine bosom, an anticipation of Wordsworth's line in the *Ode*:

From God, who is our home.

In the opinion of Mr. Watts-Dunton, Blake, though "entirely without humour", had "a finer sense of the supernatural than any of his predecessors"

267. its vegetative mortality. "Vegetative" and "vegetated" are leading terms in Blake's vocabulary, denoting that which is alto-

gether material, connected with the "unredeemable part of the world", and so opposed to spirit, the function of which is eternally to consume the likeness of things material. As Swinburne remarks, no mystic ever had a deeper contempt than Blake for the "vegetated shadow" or "human vegetable".

For a sympathetic account of Blake's philosophy, cf. Swinburne's *William Blake, A Critical Essay*, especially Part iii.

Letter 117

page 268. Cowper's Milton. See Letters 98–9.

268. Romney, George (1734–1802), a Lancashire lad, studied painting in London, and spent two years in Italy. He excelled as a portrait painter, and was Sir Joshua Reynolds's chief rival.

269. a sublime allegory, probably Blake's "prophetic" poem *Jerusalem*, published about the same time as the *Milton*, on his return to London in 1804. He related that he had written it "twelve or sometimes twenty or thirty lines at a time, without premeditation and even against my will".

269. defined by Plato. In this vague reference Blake is probably recalling several passages in which Plato discusses the nature and value of poetry and myth. Cf. the discussion on the ethical value of allegory and myth in the *Republic* (378 D and 588 B–589 B). In making his distinction between the "intellectual powers" and the "corporeal understanding" in their relation to poetry, Blake may have in mind a passage (*Republic*, 332 C) where Plato describes the poet as "speaking in parables or riddles" (αἰνίσσομαι).

270. both Poet and Painter. But in proportion as he progressed in the one art, he fell away in the other. His poetic climax was about 1789, when he issued the *Songs of Innocence*; the zenith of his artistic powers is to be found much later, in the drawings for the *Book of Job* (1821) and the illustrations to *Paradise Lost* (1822). Blake becomes extravagant and confused in his poetry, when he yields to the ardent imagination of the painter and tries with his pen to do the work of his brush. On the other hand, as Professor Courthope points out, "the real greatness of his artistic power is seen, when his invention as a painter is employed in the illustration of other men's poetry" (*History of English Poetry*, vol. vi).

Letter 118

page 272. putting you to that expense. As postage stamps were not yet invented, letters were paid for by the recipients. See Appendix.

273. homme des affaires. A good business man.

274. Shenstone, William (1714–63), author of *The Schoolmistress* and the *Pastoral Ballad* (see Letter 70). Burns had an exaggerated opinion of the *Elegies*. In his preface to the Kilmarnock edition of his poems (1786) he wrote of Shenstone as a poet "whose divine elegies

do honour to our language, our nation, and our species". The *Elegies* are twenty-six in number, the first praising retirement and the simplicity of a country life, the last expressing the "sorrow of an ingenuous mind on the melancholy event of a licentious amour". The last verse may at times have struck Burns with the chill of premonition.

> And see my youth's impetuous fires decay;
> Seek not to stop reflection's bitter tear;
> But warn the frolic and instruct the gay,
> From Jessie floating on her watery bier.

274. Thomson, James (1700–48), author of *The Seasons* (1730) and *The Castle of Indolence* (1746).

274. Man of Feeling, a novel by Henry Mackenzie (1745–1831), written under the influence of Sterne, and published anonymously in 1771. The extravagance of Burns's admiration for this work will puzzle the majority of those who have read it. He tells us that he wore out two copies of the book, carrying it in his pocket to read at odd moments.

274. Man of the World, a long and verbose novel, also by Mackenzie, and published anonymously (1773).

274. Sentimental Journey, published in 1768, gives, with some humour and pathos—the pathos at times rather affected—Sterne's impressions of travel in France and Italy.

274. Ossian. See Letter 70.

Letter 119

page 275. some unnamed feelings. Burns gave a better account of these "things" in his poem, *Mauchline Belles*, where half-mockingly, half-seriously, he utters a warning against his own "rakish art".

> Your fine Tom Jones and Grandisons,
> They make your youthful fancies reel;
> They heat your veins, and fire your brains,
> And then ye're prey for Rob Mossgiel.
>
> Beware a tongue that's smoothly hung,
> A heart that warmly seems to feel;
> That feeling heart but acts a part—
> 'T is rakish art in Rob Mossgiel.

Letter 120

page 277. leisurely pilgrimages. Burns's wish was fulfilled. While he was kept waiting at Edinburgh by his dilatory publisher, Creech, he made tours, generally on horseback, through the Border country and the Highlands.

277. three hundred pounds. In the end Burns received £500 for the Edinburgh Edition of his *Poems*.

277. secures me independence. In similar strain Burns addresses. in his Preface to the Edinburgh Edition, the gentlemen of the Caledonian Hunt: "Nor do I present this address with the venal soul of a servile author, looking for a continuation of those favours. I was bred to the plough and am independent."

278. patronage of a Wallace. Mrs. Dunlop claimed to be a lineal descendant of the brother of Sir William Wallace, Scotland's national hero.

Letter 121

page 278. the collector, as head of a large district with supervisors, division-officers, and ride-officers under him, would be Burns's superior.

279. Revolution principles. Burns had celebrated the French Revolution in his lines on the *Tree of Liberty*.

Heard ye o' the tree o' France—
I watna what 's the name o 't;
Around it a' the patriots dance,
Weel Europe kens the fame o't.

.

Upo' this tree there grows sic fruit,
Its virtues a' can tell, man;
It raises man aboon the brute,
It makes him ken himsel', man.
Gif ance the peasant taste a bit,
He 's greater than a lord, man.
An' wi' the beggar shares a mite
O' a' he can afford, man.

Letter 122

page 281. Southey (1774 1843) had entered Baliol College in 1792, and had already written *Joan of Arc*, an epic in twelve books.

281. at Jesus, for what proved to be Coleridge's last term in Cambridge.

281. Pantisocracy, a communistic scheme in which all (*πάντες*) would be equal (*ἴσοι*) in power (*κράτος*). In an argument with the Master of his college, Coleridge, we are told, broke off the discussion by declaring that he was "neither Jacobin, nor Democrat, but a Pantisocrat".

281. Shad, i.e. Shadrach Weekes, a boy-of-all-work in the household of Southey's aunt at Bristol. Southey had taken the lad, who was about his own age, into his confidence and made a companion of him.

281. Edith Fricker—sister of Sara—afterwards the wife of Southey.

281. Brookes and Berdmore, two undergraduates.

281. Caldwell, George, was a college friend of Coleridge. He became afterwards a fellow of Jesus College.

282. sonnets. Coleridge seems to have impressed Southey with his own early love of the sonnet. Coleridge tells us that when he was about seventeen, he was won back from "delving in the unwholesome quicksilver mines of metaphysic depths" by reading Bowles's sonnets. Coleridge's volume of *Poems on Various Subjects* (1797) contained a collection of *Sonnets on Eminent Characters.*

282. Mrs. Southey, Southey's mother, who resided at Bath.

282. Lovell, one of Southey's Bristol friends, married to Mary Fricker—sister of Sara and Edith—and a convert to Pantisocracy.

Letter 124

page 283. Redcliff Hill. Coleridge married Sara Fricker in Oct., 1795. They lived at first in a cottage at Clevedon; but, finding himself too far from a good library, Coleridge moved back to Bristol, taking rooms on Redcliff Hill.

283. who deserted me. The reference is plainly to Southey, who married Edith Fricker in Nov., 1795, and, having received an offer of employment from an uncle, sailed the same winter for Lisbon, after informing Coleridge that he had abandoned Pantisocracy. The result was a breach which was never fully healed.

284. my pay beforehand. Cottle had made an advance to Coleridge on the strength of the volume of poems in preparation (*Poems on Various Subjects*).

284. my copyholder. The copyholder was an old-fashioned device (two pieces of lead joined by a string) for holding copy, while the printer set it up. Nowadays the term, if used at all in a printing office, generally denotes the boy (or girl) assisting the proofreader and known as the P.D. (printer's devil).

Letter 125

page 285. at Racedown. A legacy of £900, left to him in 1795 by Raisley Calvert, enabled Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy, who was the younger by about a year, to set up house together. Wordsworth left London and made his home for two years at a farmhouse at Racedown in Dorset.

285. a tragedy, *The Borderers*, not published till 1842. It shows in its action the influence of Schiller's *Robbers*. The scene is laid on the borders of England and Scotland in the time of Henry III. The Borderers are a band of outlaws, united by oath to "guard the Innocent" and remedy social wrong. The tragic element is supplied by the wavering character of Marmaduke, their captain. "Weak! I am weak," he cries, "there does my torment lie." Osward, strong and unscrupulous, leads Marmaduke into an act of murder.

285. Poole's opinion. Thomas Poole was a well-to-do farmer at Nether Stowey, whose acquaintance Coleridge made in the summer of 1794. A firm friendship sprang up between them, and Poole secured

the cottage in Stowey, whither Coleridge moved with his wife and child at the close of 1796.

Letter 126

page 287. Allfoxden, usually spelt Alfoxden. The local spelling to-day is Alfox*ton*.

287. my stock of poetry. This included *We are Seven* and the *Anecdote for Fathers*, both written early in 1798. In March Wordsworth had begun *The Thorn*, taking the scenery of the poem not from his neighbourhood but from the mountainous home of his boyhood. *Peter Bell* was commenced just a week after this letter was written. The proximity of Coleridge—residing at Stowey, about two and a half miles distant—made this period most fruitful for Wordsworth. Dorothy's *Journal*, begun at Alfoxden, shows what a vivid element he was in Wordsworth's life and how constant was their intercourse. Thus in March (1798) from the 9th to the 18th the Coleridges stayed at Alfoxden; on the 20th Coleridge dined with the Wordsworths; on the 21st they took tea with him; on the 23rd he dined with them; on the 24th he called; on the 25th they walked to his house after tea—and so on. [The speculative habit leads us to ask, what would have been the result to Wordsworth, if the Pantisocratic scheme had matured; and Coleridge had been by this time felling trees on the banks of the Susquehanna.]

287. old trees in the park. The park was part of the grounds belonging to Wordsworth's house. The old trees are still well preserved.

Letter 127

page 288. the poems have not sold ill. Cottle must have been reluctant to disclose the facts to Wordsworth. About this time he disposed of several of his copyrights to Longman, among them that of the *Lyrical Ballads*. This being estimated at *nil*, Cottle asked to have it returned, and made a present of it to Wordsworth, who was thus able to issue a second edition.

288. The Ancyent Marinere was the first poem in *Lyrical Ballads*, and, in some quarters, met with extraordinary hostility. Southey, in a review, described it as "a Dutch attempt at German sublimity".

288. a second edition. This appeared in two volumes in the autumn of 1800.

288. Charles Lloyd (1775–1839), the poet, before his acquaintance with Wordsworth was the friend of Coleridge and Lamb. He lived with Coleridge at Bristol, and also at Nether Stowey until the summer of 1797. In 1798 he published with Lamb a volume of *Blank Verse*. His sister Priscilla married Wordsworth's brother Christopher.

289. no particular house. Some three months later, on a tour in the Lake District, Coleridge and Wordsworth were much struck with Grasmere and its neighbourhood; and in December Wordsworth and

his sister moved into the cottage at Town-End. It was furnished by means of a legacy of £100 which had come to Dorothy from an uncle. Here Wordsworth "fell to composition immediately", preparing for the second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads*. In 1808, with his wife, sister, and three children, he moved to a larger house, Allan Bank, in the same locality. Rydal Mount became his home in 1813.

Letter 128

page 290. a friend, Raisley Calvert, who died of consumption, and to whom, in his last illness, Wordsworth showed great kindness.

290. Lord Lowther paid in 1802. The sum was divided among the five children.

290. our poor brother, John Wordsworth, captain of an East Indiaman, who went down with his ship off Weymouth, early in Feb., 1805. While in charge of the pilot, the vessel struck on a rock, as she was beginning a voyage to the East. Captain Wordsworth stuck bravely to his post to the very last. His loss was a great grief to William and Dorothy, as well as to Coleridge.

APPENDIX

LETTERS AND THE POST OFFICE

The earliest English post was a body of messengers carrying letters for the king only. The controller of these grew into the Postmaster-General. Under Henry VIII we hear of a Master of the Posts—*Magister Nunciorum, Cursorum, sive Postarum* — who managed the posts "in England and in other parts of the king's dominions beyond the seas". This service, with its relays of messengers and horses, was well organized in the reign of James I, who wanted rapid communication between London and Edinburgh. Postmasters, appointed at certain centres, had to keep at least two horses in readiness to carry Government letters express; and the posts had to maintain a speed of seven miles an hour in summer, and five in winter.

The Master of the Posts was permitted by Charles I to carry private letters also. Here was the nucleus of the modern Post Office. The income from this source grew so large, that in 1653 the holder of the office had to pay Cromwell's Government £10,000 a year for what was now a valuable monopoly. The rates or "portage" then charged were: up to 80 miles, 2*d.*; London to Berwick, 3*d.*; to Dublin, 6*d.*

In 1660 an Act was passed "for erecting and establishing a Post Office"; and Charles II's first postmaster had to pay as rent the sum of £21,500. The

germ of the system of "franking" is to be found in this Act; and in a short time the custom was introduced of carrying free the inland letters of Members of Parliament *during the session of Parliament.*

A remarkable man, William Dockwra, introduced in 1680 a penny post for London. He divided the town from Blackwall to Westminster into seven districts, each with its sorting office. Packets not exceeding a pound in weight were carried from one end of London to another for a penny. Dockwra was the first to use postmarks showing the hour of receipt at a sorting office. In the end, his enterprise was declared by court of law an infringement of the Government monopoly, and his business was taken over by the Postmaster-General. His services were rewarded by William III with a pension.

By 1690 the inland post was running along six main roads, North, Chester and Holyhead, Western, Kent, Bristol, and Yarmouth, each road having its own clerk in the London office to sort and tax letters. The roads were divided into sections or "stages" of about fifteen miles, each with its own postmaster (generally an innkeeper), responsible for the carriage of mails over his stage. The postage on all "bye-letters" — letters stopping short of London or going across country — was a perquisite of the postmasters. As yet no provincial town had a letter carrier or postman. Outside London the only official was the postmaster; and for acting as postman he charged a local fee assessed by himself.

In 1696 the first cross-country post was established. It ran from Exeter to Bristol, and was subsequently extended to Chester. Previously the posts between Exeter and Bristol had passed through London, so costing double — 3*d.* from Exeter to London and 3*d.*

from London to Bristol. In 1720 Ralph Allen, postmaster of Bath — Pope's "humble Allen", who was wont to "do good by stealth and blush to find it fame" —made a contract with the Government for developing these "cross-posts", as they were called, offering to rent them at 50 per cent more than the then annual yield. Under his diligent hands an elaborate and lucrative system of cross-posts grew up, to the great convenience of country correspondents.

In 1735 Members of Parliament complained of their letters being opened in transit. It was found that Sir Robert Walpole maintained—at an annual cost of £4700—a private office at the General Post Office in Lombard Street, expressly for the purpose of examining and even opening letters. The head of this office, known as the "Chief Decipherer", and enjoying a salary of £1000 a year, was the Dean of Lincoln. Walpole's object was a political one; but, apart from this, there was some ground for official scrutiny. Letters were classified as single or double. A letter was double if it contained more than one sheet, or if it was written by two or more persons. The presence of two handwritings could generally be discovered only by prying with the aid of strong candlelight.

The privilege of "franking" was much abused. It was found that poor relations of Members of Parliament trafficked in franks, selling them to business houses by the dozen or the gross. In 1764 the privilege was regulated by statute. Letters, not exceeding 2 oz., were to be franked only during a session of Parliament and forty day before and after a session. Hitherto it had been enough for a Member of Parliament to sign his name on the outside of the letter; now he had to write the whole address and append his signature. Subsequently the date had to be added, and

the frank was valid only if the letter was posted on that date. Franks were often forged. The *Gentleman's Magazine* records the sentence of a "young gentleman" to transportation for such felony. Dr. Johnson's correspondence with Mrs. Thrale shows that he addressed her letters to Mr. Thrale, who as a Member of Parliament would receive them for nothing. He tells her that he would not send such slight productions, if they were to be any expense to her. Mrs. Thrale, we are told, ventured to imitate her husband's signature. Baretti says she "franked" for Mr. Thrale. This was, of course, a grave risk. Crabbe's lines show the value set on franks:

> Letters were sent, when franks could be procured;
> And, when they could not, silence was endured.

The ordinary letter, such as was sent by Johnson or Cowper, was a single sheet folded in such a way that the unwritten portion formed an envelope, the whole being closed with seal or wafer, There was not much space for writing, and the best value was got by those who, like Jane Austen, wrote a small neat hand. As a rule, the recipient paid the postage; in consequence modest people often refrained from writing lest their letters should not be deemed worth threepence.

Prepayment was compulsory in the London penny post; it was permissible, but not encouraged, in other cases. Servants were known to destroy the letters entrusted to them and steal the pence. Most people did not use the penny post unless they could post their letters themselves. Many villages and small towns were, like Olney, connected by a branch post with a main route. Olney was served from Newport Pagnell, and received from Lombard Street an allowance "in aid of its post". Connection between village and post

town was often made by a local penny post. By the close of Cowper's life a foot messenger carried mails between Olney and Newport Pagnell; and the inhabitants then paid an extra penny. Thus charges mounted up. To a busy correspondent like John Wesley, whose custom it was to prepay his letters, where possible, and not to use franks, postages must have been a heavy item of expenditure.

Cowper has described the mounted postboy with his horn, as he must often have seen him riding over from Newport Pagnell, or carrying the letter bags on the main road before the advent of mail coaches.

> Hark! 'tis the twanging horn! o'er yonder bridge
>
> He comes, the herald of a noisy world,
> With spattered boots, strapped waist, and frozen locks;
> News from all nations lumbering at his back.
> True to his charge, the close-packed load behind,
> Yet careless what he brings, his one concern
> Is to conduct it to the destined inn,
> And, having dropped th' expected bag, pass on.
>
> —*The Task*, Book IV, 1–11.

In 1784 an immense improvement in the whole postal service took place through the sagacity and energy of John Palmer, the manager of a theatre. He persuaded Pitt to send mails by the coaches, which were now running regularly on most of the main roads. Gradually the slow and unreliable horse posts were abolished, and a wide-reaching service of fast mail coaches took their place. The results were a great saving of time (the journey to Bristol occupying seventeen hours instead of thirty-eight) and much greater security. Armed guards travelled with the coaches; and robbery of the mails, which had hitherto been exceedingly common, became a rare event. Pitt was quick to see that an increase of correspondence was bound to result, and

raised the rate a penny on all single letters. In spite of this the circulation advanced rapidly, until, even before the inauguration of railways, the Post Office became a valuable source of public revenue.

The following table shows the cost of postage for single and double letters from London in the eighteenth century.

Distance.	1765. Single.	1765. Double.	1784. Single.	1784. Double.
1 stage	1*d.*	2*d.*	2*d.*	4*d.*
2 stages	2*d.*	4*d.*	3*d.*	6*d.*
Under 80 miles	3*d.*	6*d.*	4*d.*	8*d.*
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